

Simons LEAP experience

I moved to London nearly 18 months ago. I've been having problems with severe anxiety for many years. I feared seeking support, as I'd had bad experiences with doctors and services in Chester. I honestly didn't know where to turn for help...

After 6 months or so of this turmoil – due to the panic attacks I'd regularly been experiencing I'd become incredibly isolated, scared to leave my flat, literally petrified – I summoned up the courage to start attending courses provided by MITHN, at Open House in Bow. The Confidence Building course I attended was excellent and helped me immensely.

One of the lovely people who work at MITHN told me about the LEAP Peer Leader Training Course and gave me the course syllabus leaflet. It appealed to me so much that I registered onto the course immediately.

To be able to view my personal experiences as a form of training, to be able to put a 'silver lining' around all the years I'd been struggling with my mental health, to be able to use my lived experience to help others who found themselves in the same situation that I was, and to be able to turn this experience into a fulfilling career... This was an amazing opportunity.

I'd never been to Mind in Newham before... I'd never even been to Newham... I was incredibly anxious.

The warm and friendly welcome I received from everyone immediately put me at ease. The first session of Leap Peer Leader Training flew by. The atmosphere was relaxed and fun. The course leaders were fantastic – knowledgeable, understanding, empathetic, caring and genuinely lovely. I can't think of any environment more conducive to good learning.

I looked forward to and enjoyed every session. I think my only criticism is that there were only 5 sessions!

After the first session I saw a position listed on the NHS jobs website for a Peer Support Worker. I didn't fit the criteria exactly, as it specified that a Peer Support Worker training course MUST have been completed, but I sent in my application anyway and was successful at getting an interview.

I never thought I'd be able to go to a job interview again, as my anxiety had been so bad. But do you know what? I was able to shine. Everything I'd learned up to that point allowed me to speak with confidence and knowledge.

I got the job!

I am now an NHS Peer Support Worker, I volunteer for MITHN and Inspire, I'm part of the Inspire Co-Production working Group, I attend Mental Health Partnership Board meetings, I go to Peer Support evenings at Working Well Trust, and I help to lead a Mindful Health course at Open House.

In my darkest days, not that long ago, I would never have thought that my life could turn around like this so quickly.

I can't speak highly enough of the Leap Peer Leader Training course, the course leaders and everyone at MITHN. I learned a lot, made some fantastic friends, and built strong relationships and connections that I'm sure will help me in my new career.