

MEDIA RELEASE

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My journey from psychosis to psychology

V Gupta experienced her first psychotic episode whilst travelling during her year out from university. She came back feeling paranoid and convinced that there were cameras in places she was staying and that people were trying to poison her. She thought her family were imposters and didn't want to leave the house. Two years on, with help from Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust's Psychosis Intervention and Early Recovery (PIER) team, she is on the road to recovery, has obtained a 2:1 BSc in Psychology and is studying to become a community mental health nurse.

Attached is Gupta's story in her own words. Here are just a few extracts of Gupta's story.

"I also couldn't watch television because I thought the presenters on TV had a secret code that they were conveying to the world through the gestures they used and thought they were spreading messages specifically about me. Therefore, I thought there were a lot of conspiracies going on that directly involved me and this made me really scared and vulnerable."

"After 4 weeks of being an inpatient I am very lucky to have met the PIER team who are a community early intervention psychosis team who were placed in charge of my care after I left the hospital and who have been integral to my recovery. Under the guidance of Community Psychiatric nurses, Occupational therapists, Psychologists and Psychiatrists I have made a successful recovery from my diagnosis of Paranoid Schizophrenia and am in complete remission at the minute. They looked after me through my hardest times and also my best and really saw my potential and empowered me to: understand my illness; look after myself and pursue my goal of becoming a mental health nurse. They really inspired me to do for others what they did for me."

"I have learned through identifying early warning signs or possible triggers you can successfully manage your condition and this is really important. So it is helpful to really understand when you are most at risk of having symptoms and also useful to be able to identify when the voices you hear, things you see or smell are real or not real. This is definitely one of the hardest things to do. I know that what helps me is in identifying patterns of these symptoms."

“I know there is a lot of stigma attached to those with Psychosis and talking about it can be hard but I was open and honest about my condition to my university interviewers and they did not see my disability but my ability. There will always be people who don’t understand but there will also be people who do, like the PIER team.”

“The PIER team really showed so much compassion and care and empowered me to be where I am at today. I am forever indebted to them and I have had such a positive experience being one of their service users!”

Rebecca Stewart, Mental Health Practitioner at PIER describes the service: “Getting help to people early is a really important way to help in their recovery. The aim of our service is to help people (aged 14 to 35 years) who have experienced a first episode of psychosis to recover, to manage any ongoing difficulties, and to minimise the chance of potential relapse. We also offer support to families.

Mental Health difficulties can affect many people at some level during their lives, whether this is feeling stressed, anxious or low in mood.

Sometimes people have experiences they find difficult to explain. This could be hearing voices, tasting, smelling or seeing things that other people cannot. At other times people have unusual thoughts— such as feeling that others can read their minds, that they are being controlled or that they have special powers. These experiences are often called ‘psychosis’. The P.I.E.R. team has been set up to work especially with people who have experienced a first episode of psychosis.

If you think you need help or further advice please speak to your GP. You can read more about Gupta’s story and find out more about the PIER service at www.leicspart.nhs.uk/pier”

A key focus of the Better Care Together programme is about ensuring people get mental health support as early as possible as this helps to prevent escalations in their condition.

Gupta is available for interview on request.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust (LPT) provides a range of health and wellbeing services mainly for people living Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. The Trust serves a population of one million, has a budget in excess of £267 million and employs approximately 5,400 staff. For more information visit www.leicspart.nhs.uk

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