

## **January 2018 Trust Board – Andrea’s story**

Andrea\* shared her story about the Trust’s Primary Care Wellbeing Service (PCWS) at January’s Board meeting.

Andrea is a nurse, and her story began 18 years ago when she was caring for a patient with clostridium difficile (C. diff) and started showing some symptoms herself. She was diagnosed with ulcerative colitis and spent many years undergoing various surgeries, including the removal of her colon and the fitting of a stoma. During a later operation, it was discovered that Andrea had been misdiagnosed, and was suffering from Crohn’s disease and not ulcerative colitis, meaning that many of her surgeries had been unnecessary. An unfortunate consequence was that, due to having so many pelvic surgeries, Andrea had been left unable to have children.

Andrea’s condition is now life limiting, as she has no large bowel and very little small bowel. She continues to undergo 12-hour infusions at home, three times a week.

While Andrea was going through the surgeries, and after she was told about her original misdiagnosis, she did not receive any psychological support and felt very alone; she was coming to terms with no longer being able to become a mother, while her relationship was breaking down and she was sinking into debt after being off work for a long time.

Andrea’s GP referred her to participate in the pilot of the PCWS. When she first accessed the service she was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) to the point where the beeping at supermarket checkouts would make her feel like she was back in hospital surrounded by beeping machines. Andrea described herself at the time as ‘completely traumatised’. With the PCWS team, Andrea underwent eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing (EMDR) therapy which allowed her to overcome her trauma. Andrea credits the PCWS team, and her key worker in particular, with helping her to return to doing some nursing work on wards, which she would not have previously been able to do. She has also appreciated having the opportunity to work through many emotions which she had internalised as she had been unable to deal with them.

A physiotherapist from the PCWS team has worked on Andrea’s scar tissue, reducing painful bowel obstructions and improving the appearance of her tummy. She is also seeing a dietitian who is helping her to maximise the nutrients that she absorbs from food.

Since receiving holistic treatment from the whole PCWS team, Andrea’s consultant at Bradford Royal Infirmary has been impressed that she has had a greatly reduced number of admissions into hospital. Andrea feels that, because of the team’s intervention, she is emotionally equipped to deal with any future problems.

(\*Name has been changed for anonymity.)