

Case study

Carol discusses her experience of being a carer for her daughter and her involvement in projects to improve mental health care.

I've got four children, two sons and two daughters. My youngest daughter Laura became mentally unwell about three years ago, when she was 16. It was horrendous at the time.

She wasn't herself and seemed very depressed. She got counselling through her doctor and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) but eventually had to be sectioned. She was diagnosed with a form of bipolar and was in and out of hospital for two years.

After being discharged she was supported by the [Early Intervention In Psychosis \(EI\) Team](#) who were brilliant. They saw us at home or in cafes, rather than in a hospital environment, which felt more comfortable and family-centred. Laura missed two years of school and sixth form but managed to catch up. Now she's at university and doing really well. She's still under the care of the EI Team and sees a Community Psychiatric Nurse which helps.

Since my daughter's been unwell I've got involved in different projects to help improve mental health care. I've been helping Joining the Dots (JtD) for almost a year now. It's a co-produced project involving BMH, service users and Otsuka Health Solutions that looks at supporting the provision of recovery focused care in Bristol services.

I'm part of the JtD service user carer group that meets every couple of weeks. I'm helping to develop a digital care planning tool, which we're designing to help health care professionals and service users to work together to produce care plans. We're also involved in organising training to support service users to use the tool. I've appeared on a panel at an event Joining the Dots held too, where I spoke about my experiences as a carer. I like the way the project works. I feel fully involved in its development.

I've also taken several courses relating to caring and mental health, and joined groups about this too. I took part in a carers' course about dealing with psychosis, joined a Rethink course about coping as a carer and completed an [online course](#) about caring for people with psychosis and schizophrenia that I'd recommend. This helped me as my daughter had experienced psychotic episodes. It felt empowering to get involved with these courses.

I currently run my own small business but am hoping that I can work in the mental health field or with families more in the future.