

## Colleen Simon Central and North West London NHS FT

### Speakers

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I wasn't aware of any role models within social work early in my career, I, I really didn't think about progressing, if I'm honest. I enjoyed the work, I thought well I'll make it to sort of team manager level, and that'll that'll be it for me. And I just, I just really saw the glass ceiling and didn't think about pushing through it. And since I came into this role, a lot of people have kind of really set well, you know, well done, it's really good to see you in that role, you deserve it., and it's kind of really made me feel like, wow, I've achieved something. And I want people to be able to aspire to apply for roles like mine, that also other roles that they might have felt were unattainable like I did. I am seeing the change in the tide, I am seeing more diverse people in leadership. I'm seeing that across local authorities and across NHS Trusts, so I feel like there there has been a change, it's a positive thing. I think there does need to be more diversity, particularly when we think about the communities we serve in mental health. I've been a social worker since 2003, and I think my journey really kind of started with very early experiences of racism and discrimination. And I kind of really felt like, I wanted to fight for a more fair and just world. And social work is all about social justice and challenging inequality. And I really, you know, enjoyed working with service users, and all of the challenges. I worked for a local authority for quite some time, and they really nurtured and developed me, and gave me access to a host of training. So leadership training, AHMP training, best interest assessor training, I was also able to develop my own skills for kind of delivering training myself. So you know, work for a university and deliver training myself, and I really want all social workers to have access to that, access to be nurtured and developed within the profession. There is a social worker at board level, and she did my role in the past. So this is a real sort of role model for, you know, people to aspire to get to that level within the organisation. So in terms of social workers role in multidisciplinary teams, I see the role as being very much about bringing that social model of social work, but also that human compassionate kind of approach as well. And not to say that it's not already within the trust. But I think that in terms of advocacy, in terms of signposting in terms of linking our service users to the community, I see that as where the social worker strengths are, linking people to communities, advocating giving service users a voice, I think it's really about building relationships, and engagement, engagement with that person with their communities. And yeah, just really giving people a voice in that space. There's a lot of work going on at the moment around sort of job planning, around, you know,

sort of growing our own but also retaining our own and I think part of that is we need, we need to develop a structure that people can move through in terms of their development. So initially, that would involve you know, maybe when when people are feeling more confident, taking on a mentoring role, that people who have done the ASYE programme themselves can kind of mentor a new ASYE a couple of years later. They could then proceed to doing practice education. There's the improvement health professional pathway. So although there was already a plan in place, I feel like I want to take it to the next level. So myself and my deputy, you know, our vision is to have a social work academy to grow our own, to attract graduates, you know, to kind of mould and develop them in in the organisation. And to really have that flexibility. We have a lot of unique roles, right across addiction services, mental health prisons, perinatal, older adults. We have social workers training to become therapists. We've got social workers at director level. So there are a lot of opportunities available. I think the opportunities are endless. There's also leadership programmes within the NHS that people can access and a wide variety of opportunities for social workers to thrive and to try different things.