

**“I am lucky to see the impact of my role and what would happen if it didn’t exist. Seeing a positive result in a person’s well-being is the best thing ever.”**

Read about Idris’s experience as a mental health nurse to discover what it’s really like to work for us.

## **Idris Gbadamosi**

### **Physical health site practitioner**

#### **Employer or university**

Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust



### **How I got into the role**

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Becoming a mental health nurse was a deeply personal journey for me. Growing up in a Black African community, mental health was often stigmatised, and there was a lack of awareness around the importance of mental well-being.

I saw these challenges myself after a family friend died due to a lack of awareness of depression and suicide. I was passionate about destigmatising mental health and creating a more compassionate and understanding approach.

I started my studies in 2013 when I enrolled at Baptist Nursing School in Saki, Nigeria and became a registered nurse in 2016. I worked as a general nurse for nine months and then studied mental health nursing at the Post Basic Mental Health School in Aro, Abeokuta. I proudly graduated in November 2019.

I continued to work in Nigeria until November 2021 when I moved to the UK to work as a mental health nurse. This marked a significant chapter in my career. Since then, I have embraced new challenges and opportunities.

Being a Black African nurse I recognise the unique intersectionality of cultural factors that impact on mental health. I wanted to bridge the gap between cultural sensitivity and mental healthcare, ensuring that individuals from diverse backgrounds receive the support they need without feeling misunderstood or marginalised.

## **What I do**

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There is evidence that people with mental health problems do not get the same level of access to physical healthcare compared to the average population. In fact, some even die at least 15 years earlier. It's important to me to tackle this inequality. I am trying to bridge the gap.

I support people with mental health problems who also have physical health problems such as diabetes and high blood pressure. I help them access the specialised physical health support that better meets their needs. This could mean liaising with specialists, such as occupational therapists and speech and language therapists.

I also train other healthcare professionals. This helps them tailor the care and treatment they offer to better meet the needs of the people I work with.

## **The best bits and challenges**

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Getting my parents' approval to study mental health nursing was difficult at first because of the stigma in my community around mental health. There are moments of scepticism and misunderstanding, making it difficult to initiate conversations about mental health. Building trust within communities takes time, but the impact of breaking down these barriers is immensely rewarding.

There is an emotional toll of witnessing individuals in distress so self-care is important. I am lucky I have a supportive network of colleagues and mentors. I have also developed skills in building resilience and have coping mechanisms for maintaining my own mental well-being while continuing to support others.

The best thing is making a positive impact on people's lives and being part of changing perceptions of mental health. I am lucky to see the impact of my role and what would happen if it didn't exist. Seeing a positive result in a person's well-being is the best thing ever.

## **Top tips for others**

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Mental health nursing requires dedication, a genuine desire to help others, and a commitment to ongoing learning and personal growth. You should stay true to your passion. There are challenges but the passion will keep you going. It is important to remember self-care and resilience building because looking after others can be emotionally taxing. Having a network and mentors will also provide valuable guidance and support as well as help you develop your career.

## **Career plans**

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I completed my degree in mental health nursing at the University of Derby earlier this year. My next step is becoming a health and social care leader. I am currently doing the Rosalind-Franklin leadership programme. This is my first step in developing my leadership skills.

Leadership will allow me to address the specific needs of the people I work with and help me influence the direction of mental health services locally, nationally and globally.

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