

## ROLE MODEL

# Louise Theodosiou

The child and adolescent psychiatrist at Central Manchester University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust speaks to **Anne Gulland**



What's amazing about working with 16 to 17 year olds is the sense that you can help change their lives

### NOMINATED BY PETER SWEENEY

"Louise is a fantastic adolescent psychiatrist, who has the superb skill of being able to relate to young people, many of whom are experiencing significant emotional health problems and presenting in crisis. Louise's warm and empathic approach gives young people a space to explore their difficulties, and find practical solutions. She is also a passionate advocate for the LGBT community, and her work has improved awareness of emotional health difficulties in this group of young people. She has inspired me and many other doctors to choose psychiatry."

Peter Sweeney is consultant psychiatrist at Central Manchester University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Louise Theodosiou is a great advocate for psychiatry and feels lucky to have made it her career. "What makes it amazing is the opportunity to really understand what's going on in people's lives," she says. "We have this chance to understand why someone has reached the point they have, and to help them change things."

Theodosiou was first exposed to society's disparities during her childhood in Africa, where her father was a paediatrician. She now works in Moss Side, an area of Manchester once synonymous with gang violence. "It's a privilege and I feel like I'm working with some of the communities that I worked with in Africa," she says.

Her work with a service called Emerge focuses on helping 16 to 17 year olds transition into adult life. "We try to emphasise the fact that for many people an episode of mental ill health will not be something that is ongoing," she says. "We're very interested in the Thrive model developed by the Tavistock Clinic. We want young adults to thrive, but there may be situations where they need help. It's about transitioning into adult life, not just into adult mental health services."

Theodosiou, who did her pre-clinical training at St Andrew's University, moved to Manchester for her clinical work. Here, she met Clive Hyde, a psychiatrist who inspired her chosen specialty. At Manchester Royal Infirmary she met patients with mental health problems in the emergency department. As a result, she applied for a psychiatric rotation where she met some "fantastic nurses who taught me so much about understanding and engaging with families."

Other inspirations include Kenny Ross, a forensic psychiatrist, and Prathiba Chitsabesan, who now works with NHS England and who supported

Theodosiou during her royal college membership exams. Theodosiou was appointed a consultant in 2005.

"What's amazing about working with 16 to 17 year olds is the sense that you can help change their lives. You can re-engage them with education and help them to change their behaviour. You can talk to them about healthy living, not smoking, and reducing their alcohol intake," she says.

Over the past two years she has also been working with young trans people. She says that she is not an expert in gender dysphoria, and that her role is more about raising awareness of trans issues. For example, a swimming pool is being built in the city and Theodosiou and her colleagues from across the public and voluntary sector have lobbied for gender neutral toilets and swimming times for trans males. "My work is about awareness raising," she says. "Attitudes are changing—a lot of that's down to the LGBT community."

Theodosiou is also trying to change attitudes to mental ill health and psychiatry through her role as a spokesperson on child and adolescent mental health for the Royal College of Psychiatrists. "There are still some families who struggle to understand depression as an illness. Some people worry about overmedicalisation, but the decisions I make when I start young people on drugs are collaborative decisions," she says.

"It's wonderful to have the opportunity to speak about subjects I know about and to feel that view is respected. The media have been respectful—it's been a positive experience."

Theodosiou says she wants to carry on with her work with the media and transgender people. But adds, "The main thing I want to do is carry on with my work as a psychiatrist. I love it—it's such a satisfying career."

Anne Gulland, BMJ Careers  
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LORNE CAMPBELL/GUZELIAN

### NOMINATE A ROLE MODEL

To nominate someone who has been a role model during your medical career, send their name, job title, and the reason for your nomination to [arimmer@bmj.com](mailto:arimmer@bmj.com)



Allyson Pollock champions the NHS ideal of universal healthcare free at the point of use, and her research challenges current moves that undermine it. Most recently, she has shown how the Health and Social Care Act 2012 is reducing the NHS to “a public funding stream and a logo.” Her critical analyses of the private finance initiative (PFI) did much to discredit this fashionable method of financing investment. She is professor of public health at Newcastle University and director of its Institute of Health and Society. Her research on children's sports has shown that their risks and harms are unmonitored and largely unacknowledged.

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# Allyson Pollock

## Tackling risks and harms

### Who has been your biggest inspiration?

My parents, family, friends, and colleagues.

### What was the worst mistake in your career?

It depends on how you view these things. My campaign against NHS privatisation, and particularly PFI, made me unpopular. More recently, researching children's sports injuries and campaigning for removal of contact harms from school rugby has also annoyed the corporate rugby industry.

### What was your best career move?

I was fortunate to be able to follow my interests and passion for public health. Ross Anderson and Hilary Stirland gave me my first senior lecturer post at St George's Medical School and as NHS consultant in public health at Wandsworth Health Authority in 1992, and I've never looked back. Also, Michel Coleman, then director of the Thames Cancer Registry, gave me free access to analyse data on inequalities in patients' access to cancer treatment and mortality. This wouldn't be possible today because of the barriers put in place by NHS Digital.

### Who has been the best and the worst health secretary?

Bevan was undoubtedly the best. In no particular order, the four worst were: Kenneth Clarke, who introduced the internal market; Alan Milburn, who brought in the NHS 2000 plan, created foundation trusts, and pushed through PFI; Andrew Lansley, who introduced the Health and Social Care Act that makes commercial contracting virtually compulsory; and Jeremy Hunt, who is presiding over the NHS's rapid break-up and privatisation, while ignoring all evidence of harm and growing inequalities.

### To whom would you most like to apologise?

My family, friends, students, and colleagues, for never having quite enough time.

### Where are or when were you happiest?

With my family and friends, many of whom are colleagues.

### What single change has made the most difference in your field?

For the worse: new public management techniques, performance reviews, commercial contracting, and the constant quest for economic growth.

### Do you support doctor assisted suicide?

Not in the current climate, when health and social care and welfare protections are being so eroded.

### What personal ambition do you still have?

To see the NHS Reinstatement Bill ([www.nhsbillnow.org](http://www.nhsbillnow.org)) back in parliament and enacted and to see chief medical officers use the evidence and advise ministers to remove dangerous contact elements from collision school sports such as rugby.

### Summarise your personality in three words

Loyal, tenacious, and a lightning rod for public interest issues.

### What is your pet hate?

Closed institutions and corporate cultures with little transparency or accountability, where people are frightened to speak out.

### Do you have any regrets about becoming a doctor and academic?

No. Working for the NHS, and in the university sector, is the greatest privilege.

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