

What does personality disorder mean to me?

Personality disorder is a way of describing people who experience distress in a particular way

This distress can affect how they cope with life, their reactions, their relationships and their safety

“You become addicted to things which make you feel alive and these things can often worsen your symptoms, even though you might think you’re making yourself feel better”

“I talk about having felt suicidal, I have self-harmed, I have overdosed, I find relationships difficult”

Personality disorder and stigma

“Being told that you have personality disorder can be quite distressing. The term itself can be a barrier for people seeking help”

“I think what I’d love is for people to be able to get help without the label”

Clinical staff and patients found the term ‘personality disorder’ unhelpful and stigmatising

In practice, applying the diagnosis of personality disorder may obscure individual needs

Personality disorder and understanding

Service users told us the importance of having staff who were compassionate, understanding and able to listen

Treating people with compassion and empathy can be life-changing and lead to real, positive outcomes

“Acknowledge that their distress is real and can be quite severe – there is a link to self-harm and suicide”

“Have more compassion towards people who are struggling with an emotional disorder so severe”

Additional resources

Safer care for patients with personality disorder

Annual Report 2023: UK patient and general population data 2010-2020

National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Safety in Mental Health