

Dr Lou Toms-Whittle

Dr Lou Toms-Whittle, GP and Primary Care Clinical Lead at DMC Healthcare tells us about how DMC has enabled her to realise her ambitions, in order to achieve outstanding care that provides equitable healthcare to all.



“I’ve learnt so much at DMC and learnt from with some truly outstanding colleagues - from head office to the frontline”

“From a young age, my family encouraged me to go into medicine”

I completed my A levels which covered the three sciences and English literature. After training at Bristol University, I worked as a junior doctor in Swindon before moving to Guy’s and St Thomas’ Hospital for GP training.

“I love the breadth and diversity medicine offers and the ability to help people”

I didn’t really enjoy hospital medicine as much as primary care. Here you can really get to know the patient, their families and the community in which they live. That’s what drew me to be a GP.

“I’ve worked in the NHS for over 13 years”

I work as a GP in South London and Kent. Whilst working, I taught medical students at King’s College London medical school and ran simulated clinics at the RCGP. For a couple of years, I ran healthcare inequalities workshops in the LGBT+ community.

“I joined DMC in August 2017”

My friend was working for DMC at the time and head-hunted me to Sheppey, where I become clinical lead. I met the practice manager and was invited in to meet the team – it was the team that sealed it for me. They are an absolutely amazing team of colleagues.

DMC offered me the opportunity to further my career and become clinical lead, followed by primary care clinical lead. It has also allowed me to develop my interests.

“The NHS is a limited resource”

I believe in the NHS and hearing about the healthcare systems in other countries lead me to understand that we are so privileged to have a healthcare system that is free at point of access, no questions asked. It is something I want to protect and running the best it can. Making sure the population can help themselves by promoting selfcare is one way to preserve the NHS.

“My advice is follow your passion”

Driven by my colleague Kerry, we have done a lot of work to improve awareness of menopause. I produced a video along with a symptom checker - it’s not just about hot flushes. Your GP is out there to help with the 100s of symptoms and the effect on people’s lives and work.

“My passion is helping as many people as possible”

As a salaried GP, you can perhaps help 30 people in a day. As a clinical lead means you can shape healthcare for 9000 people. But as a primary care lead, I can potentially help tens of thousands of people.

I look at governance and how we can work smarter, not harder. So many healthcare workers are burning out as pressures increase. I took the learning and what was working well from one site and extrapolated that across the organisation. I undertook a process review, looking at population types and needs.

“DMC offered me the ability to work at scale”

I continue to strive towards improving patient care with a particular focus on working with communities, health and social care providers and the voluntary sector to achieve equity in healthcare. I'm particularly proud of improving the DMC healthcare experience for the LGBTQ+ community.

“Menopause campaign at DMC”

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“DMC has given me the ability to realise my ambitions”

I really welcome the opportunities that I've had and the ability to work at scale. It has allowed me to strive to provide good healthcare for our patients. I've worked with some absolutely amazing colleagues over the years.

“LGBT+ campaign at DMC”

I commenced the campaign in one practice, having noticed an increase in the number of trans patients, particularly young people. I reached out to local charities and asked them what more can we do as a surgery.

I then ran a health inequalities workshop and staff training, highlighting the barriers, based on the feedback from the charities, as I was keen not to make assumptions based on one voice. We focussed on pronouns, preferred names, gender expression, romantic/platonic attraction, discussing why there are higher rates of alcohol and drug abuse, loneliness, domestic abuse, and wider health inequalities.

We also attended a youth pride event featuring Ellie's journal. At the end, we gathered tons of feedback and ideas. As a result, DMC has instigated wider training programmes for staff, gender neutral toilets, more inclusive registration forms and more.

“There is so much opportunity in primary care”

You can specialise in a multitude of areas - dermatology, prison doctor, mental health, alcohol abuse etc. There are also opportunities on the business side - to look at the processes, working at scale or having a specialist role with the Integrated care system.

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