



Healios

“He is his true individual autistic self which we love” - nurse talks about how her autistic son inspired her journey into helping others

A nurse inspired to specialise in autism and take a role at leading digital mental health provider Healios by her family's own experience with an autistic child has been speaking about their journey ahead of World Autism Awareness Day this Sunday (April 2).

Lisa Davies, from Swansea, South Wales, has worked at Healios for the past 18 months, starting as a Specialist Neurodevelopmental Clinician before becoming Neurodevelopmental Team Lead last month. She previously worked in the NHS for 18 years as a Specialist Nurse working with children and families and as an adult nurse prior to that.

Healios adopts a digital-first clinical approach, and has redefined the way mental health, autism and ADHD services are delivered to children, young people and families in the UK since it was founded in 2013. It has the largest clinical workforce specialising in children's mental health, autism and ADHD services outside the NHS and offers online assessments and support to thousands via secure video sessions.

Lisa partly went into the neurodiversity profession due to personal experience as her son Kieran received an autism diagnosis when he was four years old and this ignited an interest in the area.

The 47-year-old, who is married and has two other sons, explained why she was inspired to move full-time into working in neurodiversity and how she's able to empathise with the families she supports.

She says: “My son Kieran was diagnosed with autism when he was four years of age and is now 21. Over the years my interest has grown both personally and professionally around neurodiversity, which in time led me to working within the field full time.

“I undertook an MSc in Autism and other related conditions so that I could gain the theory that underpins my day to day practice, and how best I could support not only my son, but the families and young people I work with every day.

“I am in a privileged position that I am able to work within neurodiversity and also have a personal understanding of what families go through. Every day is different and brings new challenges, and even though I'm classed as an 'expert' in my field I am constantly learning and adapting new ideas and research into my professional and personal life.

“From experience, diagnosis from a parental perspective has given me insight as to how families feel when they receive their diagnosis and the emotions and challenges it creates at that time.

“Although every family experiences this differently, I’m able to understand the process and offer professional advice, whilst having that empathy with the family at the same time.”

For Lisa and her family, Kieran’s autism diagnosis has actually brought a great deal of happiness into their lives, which some may find surprising.

“Autism is wonderful and brings so much joy into our family life,” Lisa says. “This is also the same for my professional work, as I love to hear the wonderful stories, strengths and skills that neurodiversity brings to the world.

“We love the way our son has such a passion for his special interests and we have learnt things along the way with him. Also the way he brings routine and structure into day to day life – it’s good to know what we’re doing on certain days and can always plan ahead which before was not the case.

“Also the way my son can be free to move, stim (self-stimulate), sing or talk to himself and have no boundaries – it’s wonderful to watch and I envy him at times how he doesn’t worry what everyone else thinks around him which we are all guilty of every day. He doesn’t need to conform, he is his true individual autistic self, which we love.”

This Sunday (April 2) is the 16th annual World Autism Awareness Day and comes at the end of World Autism Acceptance Week (March 27 - April 2) which aim to put a spotlight on the hurdles that people with autism and others living with autism face every day.

Lisa believes there are still many misconceptions and misunderstandings around autism.

She adds: “We still have a long way to go with the population understanding autism and the stereotypes that people associate with it. I long for the day when we no longer need autism awareness week, that it is just an integral part of society and inclusive for all.”

Healios is set to create more than 200 jobs in 2023 after a huge rise in demand for its services. Anyone interested in joining the team can find out more about the latest opportunities at healios.org.uk/careers

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Notes to editors

About Healios

Healios is the leading digital provider of specialist mental health, autism and ADHD services for children and young people in the UK aged 25 and under. Healios is reimagining the care experience by optimally combining an expert multidisciplinary care team with evidence-based, family-centred approaches and great technology.

Proudly working in partnership with 62% of the UK's NHS children and adolescent mental health services, Healios is the largest private digital provider of specialist mental health and neurodevelopmental assessment, diagnosis and intervention services for children and young people, supporting over 37,000 patients.

For more information visit: [Healios.org.uk](https://healios.org.uk)