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NEWSLETTER · IN CONVERSATION WITH LISA KERR

Not ill enough

Lisa Kerr — Head of Patient Engagement at Evinova — on the mental-health access gap, why lived experience belongs in the room where healthcare decisions are made, and building 'Safe Space' inside AstraZeneca.

This piece touches on mental illness and access to mental-health care. Support resources are listed at the end.

Lisa Kerr went from a chemistry PhD and the analytical labs at AstraZeneca to global CMC project director — the job she'd always aimed at — and then, rooted in her own experience of mental illness, toward something else entirely. Today she's Head of Patient Engagement at Evinova, AstraZeneca's health-tech business, and a tireless advocate for putting lived experience into the decisions the industry makes for patients and employees alike.



Too complex for one service, not ill enough for another — so no one helps.

— Lisa Kerr, on Pharma Prescribed

The gap people fall into

Lisa is sharp on how broken access has become. Citing a recent Mind report, she describes a system that tells people either 'you're too complex, you don't fit my box' or 'you're not ill enough' — so those with serious conditions get bounced between services while those with depression get told to cheer up. The people who most need help are often those least able to reach it, and intervention too often waits until crisis.

Lived experience in the room

Her mission is to end the situation where talented people design products and trials for conditions they've never had to live with. Lived experience, she argues, isn't a nice-to-have consultation exercise; it's design intelligence — the difference between a trial built around patients and one built around assumptions.

Safe Space, scaled

Inside AstraZeneca she turned that conviction into 'Safe Space' — a small group that grew into employee resource groups with thousands dialling in weekly, and tools that eventually scaled globally across every kind of difference, neurodiversity included. It took real organisational inertia to move; she moved it, with purpose, energy and a well-timed sense of humour.

If you need support

You don't have to be in crisis to deserve help. A couple of good places to start:

Samaritans — for anyone struggling to cope

Call 116 123 free, any time, day or night (UK & ROI), or email jo@samaritans.org.

Mind — for mental-health information and support

Guidance, and a helpline, at mind.org.uk.



Listen to the full episode

Lisa Kerr on Pharma Prescribed — at pharmaprescribed.com and wherever you get your podcasts.

Lisa Kerr is Head of Patient Engagement at Evinova, AstraZeneca's health-tech business, and founder of AstraZeneca's Safe Space employee resource group.