

# Mobilates: Beneficiary Portraits, Individual

## Suzanne

Suzanne is a peer support worker and volunteer creative content writer for Mobilates. She lives with several long-term health conditions and disabilities, including Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, TMJ dysfunction, a neurological movement disorder, Addison's disease, psychosis, and chronic pain and fatigue. As she explains, these conditions **"impact my mobility and daily life, making even a simple task quite challenging,"** which is why physiotherapy and movement have been so central to her life and wellbeing.

Suzanne has always loved sport and exercise. As a high-level gymnast in her youth, and later a runner and international-level swimmer, she pushed her body to its limits long before her conditions were properly understood or diagnosed. **"Every time I've kind of pushed my body it would eventually give up on me and I never really understood why,"** she shared. **"I didn't know about my conditions properly. They weren't properly diagnosed, and I didn't know the proper impact they were having on me because they weren't fully explained."**

That lack of guidance changed when she found Mobilates. Suzanne first heard about the organisation through EDS UK, when Leanne, the founder, was running monthly free classes. After attending one session, she decided to take up a free trial. **"I loved that week, could see straight away it was something really special, so I signed up as a full member with unlimited access to classes."**

From the outset, the support she received exceeded anything she had previously experienced in healthcare. **"The support I've received has been incredible,"** she said. She spoke extensively about how Mobilates personalised her exercise journey, ensuring everything was safe, accessible, and empowering. **"Leanne took extra time to help me find the right places to exercise where I could see things, where I was safe, where I could hold on to things. She also helped me with the right positions and adapting so I could get the most out of every session."** Crucially, she added, **"She listened very carefully to some of my conditions, some of which are quite rare... everybody took the time to really get to know me and to learn my conditions and to support me in my journey."**

Suzanne emphasised that this support was delivered without ever making her feel different or excluded. **"What's really stood out was how personalised and supportive everything is. The added adaptations are built into the sessions, so you don't ever feel like you're being picked out or that you're different, and if you need to rest or change something it's not a**

**problem — it's seen as a positive."** The online format also increased accessibility: **"Doing the classes over Zoom means I can attend far more than if I was in person."**

Mobilates also became a vital emotional anchor. During a period when she experienced a severe neurological reaction to hospital treatment, Suzanne shared that the team **"kept me moving in ways that were safe, but also listened to me, supported me, checked in with me, cheered me on, you know, at a time when I was really struggling just to function."** The sense of community and belonging was transformative: **"However low you get and however bad things are, you can just show up to class and know that you'll be welcomed... you're surrounded by people who understand what you're going through."**

Since joining Mobilates, Suzanne has experienced profound change. **"My mental health is quite strong... they've given me a lot more coping mechanisms and support when again the NHS failed to be there for me."** Her physical transformation has been equally significant. **"When I first joined, I was completely reliant on my crutches and my wheelchair to move around. Even at home I wouldn't be able to get across my bedroom without my crutches. Now I walk around the house crutch-free completely."** She now operates her wheelchair independently and can walk beside her carer. **"To be able to actually walk side by side with somebody... it sounds small, but it's actually a really, really lovely thing."**

Her physiotherapist has been astonished by her progress. Suzanne recounted, **"She reminded me not that long ago about how four and a half, five years ago I needed help from two people to get from my chair onto her couch... whereas now I can get up and walk fairly freely across her room."** Suzanne is in fact, not only a participant now. She is part of the Mobilates team, delivering sessions and contributing creatively. **"It's really strange. I never imagined that happening,"** she laughed. She has attended in-person retreats and describes the community as **"just such an amazing community... I have made so many friends and things have changed so much."** Looking to the future, Suzanne hopes to continue building her independence and mobility. **"I think my hope for the future really is to just keep building on the progress I've been making, gain more independence."** She wants to keep teaching and supporting others the way she was supported: **"I want to keep growing the work I've started, helping others in the same way I've been helped."**

## Lisa

Lisa is a member of the Mobilates community and has navigated a complex mix of professional and personal challenges. She has previously held high-profile roles with long hours, and demanding projects. Following a period of burnout, divorce, and declining health, Lisa began a journey of self-discovery, leading to multiple diagnoses of autism, ADHD, Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome (EDS), Functional Neurological Disorder (FND), and PMDD. These diagnoses, combined with her experiences of medical trauma and emotional abuse, left her isolated and struggling to engage with both the healthcare system and social activities. **"I had a complete physical and mental breakdown,"** Lisa shared. **"I had lost all connection with my body."** Lisa discovered Mobilates, and immediately connected with Leanne, the founder and instructor. **"I loved her energy. Just felt so comfortable. And as somebody who is 'neuro-spicy' and has social anxiety, and at the time had shut down and stopped engaging with the world, it was massive to feel so comfortable."**

The sessions provided a sense of safety and understanding that Lisa had not experienced in traditional healthcare settings, including NHS physiotherapy and hydrotherapy groups, which were often impersonal and dismissive of her needs.

Lisa credited Mobilates for her physical and mental recovery. Through personalised 1-to-1 sessions with Leanne and Kerry, she rebuilt muscle strength and relearned functional movements. **"I couldn't walk to the shop... I had lost all the muscle on my right-hand side... They taught me how to walk again. Without them, I don't think I would be here."** The program also provided critical mental health support. Lisa highlighted the feeling of being truly seen and believed: **"Mentally, the support that they gave me... I felt seen and believed and cared for instead of just dismissed as being 0... It's this cycle... so difficult."**

She emphasized the social and community aspects of Mobilates, noting that the sense of connection, friendship, and peer support was empowering. **"There's a real sort of collective sense of empowerment and support... You're taking your power back in a way... It gets easier to go, 'Oh, you clarify it all, you know, here's a link for this.' Helping each other but also helping yourself."** Beyond her recovery, the program equipped Lisa to advocate for herself in everyday life, particularly in navigating hidden disabilities.

Her story exemplifies the profound impact of Mobilates on the lives of neurodiverse women and individuals with complex health conditions. Through personalized physical sessions, peer support, and community engagement, Mobilates has provided Lisa not only with physical rehabilitation but also with mental resilience, social connection, and empowerment to advocate for herself in all areas of life. **"I just feel really lucky to be a part of it... to feel a genuine part of it is exciting and it makes me feel really lucky... I want to be involved in**

any way that is supportive of Leanne and the group and the mob. There's a massive need... with the NHS, and it's not met."

## Maria

*Please note – name has been changed to reflect individual participant confidentiality. Some identifying details have been redacted.*

Maria, a public health official, first discovered Mobilates around two years ago. She had been dealing with a long-term health condition, which required a long and challenging rehabilitation process. **“I had to learn everything again. Learn how to breathe, how to move...”** she recalled. She reflected that her recovery could have been quicker had a supportive community like Mobilates been available: **“Had I found a community like Mobilates, I think it would have been a bit quicker...the progress that I’ve made - it’s been absolutely incredible.”**

Maria initially approached Mobilates with low expectations, particularly as she had been disappointed in other communities and rehabilitation offerings elsewhere. However, her experience was transformative. Meeting the instructor, Leanne, was pivotal: **“She was just a breath of fresh air... I clicked with Leanne straight away. It was just immediate.”** Maria found the supportive and inclusive environment of the classes especially meaningful: **“Being part of a community where people just get it is really, really great.”** The group dynamic and structure of Mobilates helped Maria stay motivated and consistent with her physical rehabilitation: **“In a group it’s very different... we have a dedicated hour... we do the exercise and it’s incredible.”** She appreciated the flexibility and empathy within the classes: **“If you can’t manage it, come in your pyjamas, lay in the corner, just be with us. It was just so heartening.”**

Maria faced significant health challenges this year, including non-epileptic seizures triggered by trauma, Mobilates provided critical support during these difficult times. **“Having Mobilates around and available has been... probably lifesaving. It’s been incredible... some of the techniques from the classes, has brought me out of seizure more quickly.”** The community also helped her navigate medical challenges: **“It was information that I got from the community... I had to go to the doctor and say, do you think it’s this? And they said, yeah, actually we think it might be.”**

Maria emphasised the social and emotional benefits of Mobilates. The community offered companionship and understanding, which was particularly valuable during periods of isolation: **“It makes you feel less alone and less isolated. You are not the only one.”**

Inclusivity and adaptability were core to Maria’s experience. She described Mobilates as accommodating to neurodiversity and differing abilities: **“They embrace you for what you are... very LGBTQ+ friendly... everyone can be themselves, even if they are super naughty like me.”** She highlighted the sense of belonging: **“I’ve made some really good friends**

**through our little group. It's been incredible."** Reflecting on her overall experience, Maria described it as transformative: **"Transformative is the perfect description. For that social element, maintaining my physical ability - it's been incredible."**

Maria's story demonstrates the profound impact that a supportive, inclusive community can have on rehabilitation, social connection, and emotional wellbeing. Mobilates provided her with not only physical support but also emotional reassurance, practical advice, and a sense of belonging during some of the most challenging periods of her life.