

30 March 2026

I am writing as an NHS patient of Lowestoft Community Mental Health Team (CMHT).

In 2024 I experienced severe depression which did not respond to medication. My mental health deteriorated so badly that I was eventually admitted to inpatient mental health care for almost 3 months. I was so unwell I had stopped eating and drinking and was treated with 12 sessions of ECT.

Although ECT helped my depression improve, it also caused some memory problems and I needed to continue taking multiple medications.

Within 6 months of recovering, my depression returned and I became seriously unwell again. Increasing my medication did not help and my husband and psychiatrist were both very concerned I was close to returning to hospital and worried that further ECT may cause more memory problems.

My psychiatrist suggested I try using a Flow tDCS headset. This was not provided by the NHS and we had to buy this ourselves, but my psychiatrist knew about the treatment and was able to explain it to me and my husband. Flow is a wearable medical device for treating depression that is used at home for 30 minutes several times per week. It uses transcranial direct current stimulation (tDCS) where a very tiny electrical current (400x weaker than ECT) gently stimulates brain activity. It is very easy to use and has not caused me any side effects at all.

This treatment worked very quickly and I began to improve within the very 1st week of using the headset. By 4 weeks I was almost back to my usual self. 2 months later I was walking 4 miles per day for charity and volunteering 2 days per week at a local charity shop.

This device got me better when other treatments had failed and undoubtedly saved me from ending up back in hospital and from needing ECT, which would have risked further memory damage. Having the option to use this tDCS device changed my life and gave me a choice to try something other than medication or ECT.

My husband and I are keen to share my story and advocate for this very effective and easy to use treatment for depression being made available via the NHS throughout the country. We are lucky that we could pay the £400 for the tDCS headset ourselves, but if the NHS had paid for it, it would have easily saved thousands of pounds compared to the cost of readmission to hospital and further ECT.

I want everyone suffering depression to have access to tDCS and find it really concerning that evidence based advances in technology like this exist and are not being used by the NHS. I hate the thought of patients like me ending up in hospital or having medications that don't suit them or needing ECT when this might have been avoided if they had only been able to try this tDCS headset in their own homes instead.

I urge you to make access to tDCS treatment a priority for patients with depression so that they can have more choice and opportunity to recover through home-based treatment without the risks and side effects we see with medication or ECT.

We are requesting that the Department of Health takes steps to ensure that tDCS is routinely available in all NHS mental health services in England, and we also hope that Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland might also listen.

Thank you for reading this. I hope you might help the British public to access this treatment for depression.

Yours sincerely

Pauline and James Wright