



## EPA GAINING EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME REPORT

On the observership at the *East London NHS Foundation Trust and Queen Mary University of London* "

from 02 June to 04 July 2025

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### REPORT:

My observership was an enriching and rewarding experience, providing me with the opportunity to gain valuable clinical insight and broaden my understanding of perinatal psychiatry. The placement fully met my expectations, as my primary goal was to obtain hands-on experience in a field that is currently underdeveloped in my home country. Since there are no formal fellowships or structured clinical pathways in perinatal psychiatry available in Serbia, this experience was especially important for my clinical and academic development.

From the very beginning, I felt genuinely welcome at the hosting institution. All staff members were extremely kind and accommodating. I was fortunate to spend time at two different hospitals, participating in both inpatient and outpatient services, including the Mother and Baby Unit and community-based perinatal mental health teams but also a joint clinic with gynecologists. The teams were open to questions and discussion, which facilitated my learning and integration into the daily workflow.

During my placement, I was actively involved in clinical work and assigned a variety of tasks. These included conducting patient assessments, contributing to clinical team meetings, and participating in the development of management plans. I was also involved in a case report focusing on a patient who may represent a novel clinical syndrome—an interesting case which I had only encountered sporadically in literature. This task was particularly intellectually stimulating and encouraged critical thinking, literature review, and collaborative discussion with my supervisor.

The placement had a clear clinical focus on perinatal psychiatry, which aligned perfectly with my career interests. Exposure to diverse clinical settings such as the psychiatric intensive care unit, the department for learning disabilities, and the brain stimulation service (TMS) further enriched my perspective on mental health service provision within the UK's NHS system. Observing how perinatal services are structured and integrated into general psychiatric care helped me understand the broader system-level approach, which I aim to translate and implement in my local context.

I learned a great deal during my observership, particularly regarding the pharmacological and psychological treatment of mental health disorders in the perinatal period. I became familiar with clinical pathways for managing psychiatric disorders during pregnancy and postpartum.



Additionally, I had the opportunity to explore various psychological therapies available to pregnant and postpartum patients.

My contact with Dr Nikolina Jovanović, my supervisor was excellent. We were in daily communication, and she was very supportive and organized. She created a comprehensive plan for my placement and ensured that I had learning objectives each week. I was also able to shadow her during outpatient clinics, which allowed me to observe detailed clinical assessments and complex treatment plans. Her mentorship was very valuable and deeply appreciated.

Beyond my supervisor, I also had the opportunity to engage with other clinicians and team members at the hosting institution. The collaborative atmosphere encouraged open discussion, and I was able to ask questions freely, receive feedback, and exchange ideas about clinical practices in different healthcare systems.

I shared information about my home institution during my stay, introducing my colleagues at the hosting institution to the organization of psychiatric department in my institution and the current challenges in developing perinatal psychiatry. I plan to present experiences from my observership at a clinical seminar in my department. I believe this will help raise awareness and build momentum for the development of perinatal services locally.

I did not encounter any problems during the visit. The placement was very well organized and tailored to my professional interests. I would highly recommend this type of observership to other young psychiatrists who are seeking to expand their clinical horizons and gain exposure to specialized fields like perinatal psychiatry.

In conclusion, this observership has been a formative and highly beneficial experience. It has provided me with concrete ideas and practical knowledge that I hope to apply in improving mental health care for women in the perinatal period in Serbia. The warm and inclusive environment of the host institution made the experience not only educational but also deeply motivating for my future professional goals.

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