

# Together:

Service user and carer involvement strategy





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## Welcome

I am delighted to introduce our revised and updated Together Strategy, setting out how we are going to ensure that involvement of service users and carers is embedded across the organisation, in everything we do. This is a cornerstone of our Trust Strategy, With You in Mind. This Together Strategy has been developed, discussed and agreed by Service Users and Carers, working with staff across our Trust. I'd like to personally thank everyone who has been involved for their thoughts, their care, their passion and their commitment. And I would like to make a personal commitment to deliver the ambitions set out in this strategy.

**James Duncan** - Chief Executive, CNTW

## How the strategy was developed

The Together: service user and carer involvement strategy originally launched by Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust in 2019, was co-produced through lived experience development sessions, and the Service User and Carer Reference Group. A five-year review in 2024, again brought together service users, carers, and staff who played a crucial role in ensuring that the strategy remained current and continues to direct how the Trust will involve people and communities in all that we do.

**Margaret Adams** – Co-Chair of the Service User and Carer Reference Group

## Why involvement is important

### For service users

Involvement is many different things to the many different people who take part. It inspires a sense of ownership by service users and carers who help to design and improve what's on offer, by the people and for the people. It strengthens personal empowerment; it improves skills and broadens lived experience and expertise. It is social, professional, warm, friendly, and non-judgemental. It is a place to be yourself and a space to grow. Above all else involvement is what each and every one of us wants it to be, and the Trust ensures that every point of view is listened to, every voice is heard, everybody counts.

**Paul Forsyth** - Involvement Contributor

### For carers

Involvement enhances understanding, fosters empowerment, strengthens relationships, and drives positive outcomes. By working together, we can ensure that staff continue to adopt good practices when working with carers and families, while keeping carers at the heart of our delivery. We must continue to improve service design, systems, processes, and resources. By collaborating, we can achieve this.

**Anne Carlile** - Carer Governor for Adult Services, Lead Governor

### For services

Never has it been more important to ensure that the voice of people with lived experience and the people and families who use our services are integral in shaping the future. They must be involved directly in the decisions we make and help us to demonstrate our values and drive our culture. We can only learn and improve together.

**Sarah Rushbrooke** – Executive Director of Nursing, Therapies and Quality Assurance

## Developing the Together Strategy - With You in Mind

The Trust's With You in Mind strategy, published in 2023 set out the ambitions that we want to achieve together and the path that we want to take.

The With You in Mind strategy highlights both the challenges and opportunities that we face. This means everyone working differently and 'smarter,' altering or completely reshaping services, giving people better quality and experience.

The Together Strategy underpins the priorities of the With You in Mind strategy. Working 'Together' and 'With You in Mind' is about valuing and utilising people with lived and learnt experience to improve the care we provide for people.

Above all else it is about people and how we need service users, carers, and staff working together to really make a difference.

"Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much."

(Youth Involvement Bank Contributor)

## Involvement in action

Involvement is service users, carers and staff working together to support the design, delivery and improvement of services.

When asked what involvement is and what it looks like in action, service users and carers said:

“Working together to ensure the Trust provides safe, caring, responsive, effective and well-led services.”

“Service users and carers collaborating with staff in designing, delivering and developing services.”

“Improving communication – being heard, feeling valued, sharing perspectives, reaching mutual understanding and co-deciding solutions.”

“Recognising service users and carers as leaders.”

## Together – seven strategic ambitions

In 2022 NHS England published statutory guidance on ‘Working in Partnership with People and Communities’, which means that all NHS Trusts must consider this guidance and ensure that people are involved from the start.

**‘People and communities have the skills and insight to transform how health and care is designed and delivered. Working with them as equal partners helps them take more control over their health and is an essential part of securing a sustainable NHS.’**

- Working in Partnership with people and communities: Statutory Guidance, NHS England

We need to listen to people who have experience of our services, understand their issues and what areas we can develop. We want an equal partnership where people with lived and learnt experience can work together, designing and developing our services.

We all need to work **together**, and the seven key ambitions as set out in this strategy is what will help us to achieve this.







## Service design and delivery

Together, we are all involved, as equal partners, in decisions made regarding the design, delivery and evaluation of the way that care is provided.

### What does good look like

Together we plan, create, and run services to make sure we meet the needs and expectations of service users, carers and staff, all while being productive, successful, and sustainable. Designing and delivering services well is key to providing high-quality care.

### How do we get to where we want to be

- Learn from examples of good practice and build on it.
- Involve service users and carers at the earliest opportunity in all aspects of the way that care is shaped and delivered.
- This ambition needs to be owned by everybody; we need to:
  - ensure staff and teams have personal objectives to involve people with lived experience
  - empower service users and carers to feel they can make a difference, and learn from their experiences, good and not so good



## Training

Together, we are all involved in the design and delivery of meaningful training and development initiatives.

### What does good look like

Service users and carers co-produce and co-facilitate training. This ensures staff are able to develop and learn new skills, informed by the needs of service users, carers and our communities.

### How do we get to where we want to be

- Continue to develop and build on good practice.
- Work with services and local communities to identify gaps in training.
- Consistently engage and involve service users, carers, staff and communities.
- Enhancing service user and carer representation by increasing the involvement of individuals with lived experience.
- Taking a strength-based recovery approach, involvement needs to be at the heart of training and development initiatives.



## Workforce

Together, we work as valued employees of the Trust, on the basis of the contribution we make.

### What does good look like

People from varied backgrounds, with different experiences and skill sets are valued and embedded throughout the workforce. This diversity strengthens innovation and creativity.

### How do we get to where we want to be

- Involvement of service users and carers in workforce planning, policies and procedures.
- Build a diverse workforce representative of our service users, carers and local communities, encouraging, and recruiting people with different backgrounds.
- Create exciting new roles and clear career pathways, encouraging people to join us.
- Prioritise staff wellbeing and ensure there is a supportive healthy work environment.
- Embed our inclusive culture, with compassionate and caring teams where everyone feels valued and respected, fostering a sense of community and support for our workforce.



## Recruitment and selection

Together, we  
are involved in the way we recruit people.

### What does good look like

Service users and carers are involved in all aspects of the recruitment and selection process – developing interview questions, being on panels, offering feedback and being informed of outcomes.

### How do we get to where we want to be

- Involvement should not be an afterthought.
- Encouraging staff to continue to utilise the expertise of service users and carers.
- Working as equal partners to recruit people that have the right skills, kindness and communication abilities needed to give excellent care.
- Offer recruitment and selection training to empower people and ensure meaningful involvement.



## **What's working well and why**

Together, we are involved, as equal partners, in helping us all to understand more about what's working well and why.

### **What does good look like**

Service users and carers involved as equal partners, to ensure that our services are safe, effective, caring, responsive to people's needs and well led.

### **How do we get to where we want to be**

- We will work in partnership in everything we do to meet the needs of communities and the people we support.
- Involve service users and carers in all aspects of the assurance, monitoring and evaluation process.
- Encourage a positive environment where everyone can grow and make improvements, helping all our staff to take charge and create change in their teams.
- Support the best ideas and methods from local and national information to guide how we create and improve our services.



## Communication

Together, we help to develop effective, accessible and meaningful methods of communication.

### What does good look like

Connecting on a human level, service users, carers and staff will experience effective, accessible, meaningful and jargon free methods of communication.

### How do we get to where we want to be

- Learn from what is good and build on it.
- Involvement in the design and delivery of the Trust's communications strategies, communication tools and initiatives.
- Support health literacy by working collaboratively with service users and carers who have a range of communication needs.



## Leadership

Together, we are embraced, as equals, as leaders and given opportunities to develop our leadership capabilities.

### What does good look like

Service users and carers have unique insights and acquired expertise, they need to be embraced as equals and as leaders. Together we can inspire others, build trust, and create a culture where everyone feels motivated and capable of doing their best.

### How do we get to where we want to be

- Continue to co-produce leadership development initiatives with service users and carers.
- Strengthen the involvement of people in policy and decision-making that positively impact people with mental illness, dementia, learning disabilities and neurodevelopmental needs.
- Ensure service users and carers have the same opportunities as staff to act as leaders within the Trust.



## How far we have come

We have already achieved so much **together** since the first publication of this strategy in 2019.



Creation of Involvement Bank with over **300 people** registered.



**2,000+** involvement activities involving service users and carers.



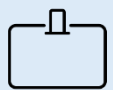
Service users and carers now included in Triangle of Care self-assessments.



**100+** Peer Supporters employed with established career progression.



**32** Service User and Carer Reference Groups taken place.



Introduction of the Carer Promise and Carer Card, with over **4,000** cards issued.



Involvement in recruitment, including for the roles of Chief Executive and Chair.



Involvement in key Trust projects such as Community Transformation.

## Where do we go next – embedding the Together strategy

Strategies feel real when they become embedded in the way we work and when people start to take practical actions, we need to further build on the way we:

1. **Talk together** - talk to others about the strategy - have conversations together.
2. **Reflect together** - think about what each of the ambitions means and reflect on what we might need to do in order to achieve them.
3. **Work together** – co-development between service users, carers, staff and our communities.
4. **Change together** – think about what might need to be done differently, in order to embed the strategy. Staff should not do this in isolation however, all staff (including corporate and business teams) need to think about how they involve service users and carers, as equal partners, in this work.

**“It’s about a change in culture: We need to see and feel that things are different. This should be demonstrated through the words and actions of everyone.”** – Together Strategy consultation collective statement

As we continue on this journey, it is important to include everyone. We need to help and encourage each other, knowing that change is personal and can look different for each person.

We will encourage you to take the lead on these changes, rather than telling you exactly what to do. We are here to support you, and our Council of Governors and Board of Directors will help us make this happen.

## Where do we go next – measuring success

It is important that we do not lose the momentum of what has been achieved so far under the Together strategy.

We need to think about why we do what we do, how we do it, and how we can seek to ensure we continuously improve and always strive to deliver great care. If we are to achieve these ambitions it is important that everyone is involved in the leadership of the organisation so we can make the most of our knowledge, experiences, different perspectives, capabilities, and skills.

We must provide assurance on the delivery of this strategy and the effectiveness of the processes by which people who are using or have used our services become involved and are listened to. We already know, from listening to people, that feedback is important. We must do more to inform service users and carers how their voice has influenced change.

**Alane Bould**, Associate Director for Lived Experience

## Get involved

Sign up to become a Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust member.

Email: [www.cntw.nhs.uk/membership](http://www.cntw.nhs.uk/membership)

Telephone: 0191 245 6827

FREEPOST CNTW MEMBERSHIP

Membership is completely free and as a member you can:

- Give your views on the Trust's plans and any issues that interest you
- Vote in the governor elections or stand as a governor yourself
- Receive regular information about the Trust

Service users and carers can register their interest with the Involvement Team, in order to be made aware of and get involved and bring their expertise to future activities and evaluations being undertaken within the Trust. Contact us on:

Telephone: 01670 501 816 or Email: [involvement@cntw.nhs.uk](mailto:involvement@cntw.nhs.uk) for further information.

If you would like to know more about the Together: service user and carer involvement strategy, please contact the Lived Experience Service: 01670 501 816

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