



Cumbria, Northumberland,  
Tyne and Wear  
NHS Foundation Trust

# With you in mind



Annual magazine  
2023

With YOU in mind

# Contents

Welcome to the latest edition of our Annual Magazine.

Each year our annual magazine has a theme and this year it is entitled ‘With you in mind’, which is our new Trust strategy. Within the magazine you will find articles about how we plan to meet our commitments in the coming years.

Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust (CNTW) is one of the largest mental health and disability care providers in England, employing over 9,000 staff and serving a population of approximately 1.7 million with a budget of over £500 million.

We work from over 70 sites across Cumbria, Northumberland, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland as well as providing a number of national and specialised services.

We hope you find the articles throughout the magazine interesting and that they provide you with a good insight into our organisation and our place within the NHS.

If you would like to find out more about us you can visit our website at [www.cntw.nhs.uk](http://www.cntw.nhs.uk) or find us on social media on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn or Instagram. Just search for @CNTWNHS.

We’d love to hear from you with any suggestions or feedback about our magazine ideas or future editions.

You can reach us at [communications@cntw.nhs.uk](mailto:communications@cntw.nhs.uk)

**Adele Joicey**  
**Head of Communications**

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## A message from our Chair

Our Annual Meeting in 2023 takes place at a very challenging time for the NHS as a whole and for our Trust – Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust.

The pressure on services is intense as evidenced in bed availability and occupancy, response and waiting times, staffing and finance.

The Monthly Performance and Finance Reports considered by our Board of Directors make the degree of difficulty we are facing all too clear.

There are tough times ahead.

At these times it is important to have stars to steer by, as Rennie Fritchie, our Guest Speaker at the Annual Members meeting in 2020, reminded us.

Our new strategy, With you in mind, provides us with the stars to steer by.

We need to be guided by our commitments, to:

- Service users
- Families and carers
- Staff
- Partners and communities

We also need to be guided by our vision, values and ambitions.

Honesty and transparency, one of our three values, will be essential as we face the challenges and do our best to respond to them.

**Ken Jarrold CBE**  
**Chair of the Council of Governors and Board of Directors**

## A message from our Chief Executive

As I reflect on my message for our annual magazine, I want to talk about our future, and the organisation we want to be, but I also need to talk about the challenges of today.

Let's start by talking about our future. In May this year we launched our new strategy "With you in mind". I know that the word strategy doesn't sound exciting, but I hope that this time it's different. Our strategy is built around what service users, carers, staff, partners and our communities have asked of us. We have listened and we have set out a series of ambitions to meet those asks. At the heart of these are our commitments to service users. These are:

- Understand my story, my strengths, needs and risks. Work with me and others so I can keep healthy and safe;
- Protect my rights, choices and freedom;
- Respect me and earn my trust by being honest helpful and explaining things clearly;
- Support me, my family and carers in an effective joined up way, that considers all my needs; and
- Respond quickly if I am unwell or in crisis, arranging support with the right expertise. Make sure I don't have to keep repeating my story.

They are not rocket science but they should be at the heart of everything we do every day. To deliver them well, we will need to meet our Carers' Promise, and our commitments to partners, our communities and of course, to our staff who make up our organisation.

Our strategy describes what good will look like as clearly and as simply as possible. It is our job together to set out how we are going to change the way we work every day to get closer to our vision. We will need to be radical and brave to do this. We can't and we won't accept things as they are now.

We will create new ways of working within and alongside our communities, together with our partners. Together, we will look to support people's whole needs and wrap care around them. We will be clear on our role in the system, but also how we join up with others so that people get the right support when they need it, over the whole of their lives. We will ensure that people are only admitted to hospital when they need it, and that when they do, they receive therapeutic care in an environment where they feel safe, and where their rights are protected. We will ensure we equally meet the needs of people with learning disabilities, or who are neurodivergent (for instance being autistic), or who have specific needs arising from addictions. We will work to ensure that our staff have the time and resources to do the right things, the things that make a real difference to people. We will make the way we work simpler and support our workforce to create thriving and successful teams.

This is not the experience of everyone today, I know that. But we have great people, and many great teams and we have so much to build on. It will take many years to deliver all we want to deliver, but we can make a difference and a positive change every day, in every decision we make. So please, read the strategy which is available on our website, think about it, share it. It's not there to sit on a shelf, it's not there to be dusted down every year so we can check how we are doing. It will be our guide for everything we do, every day.

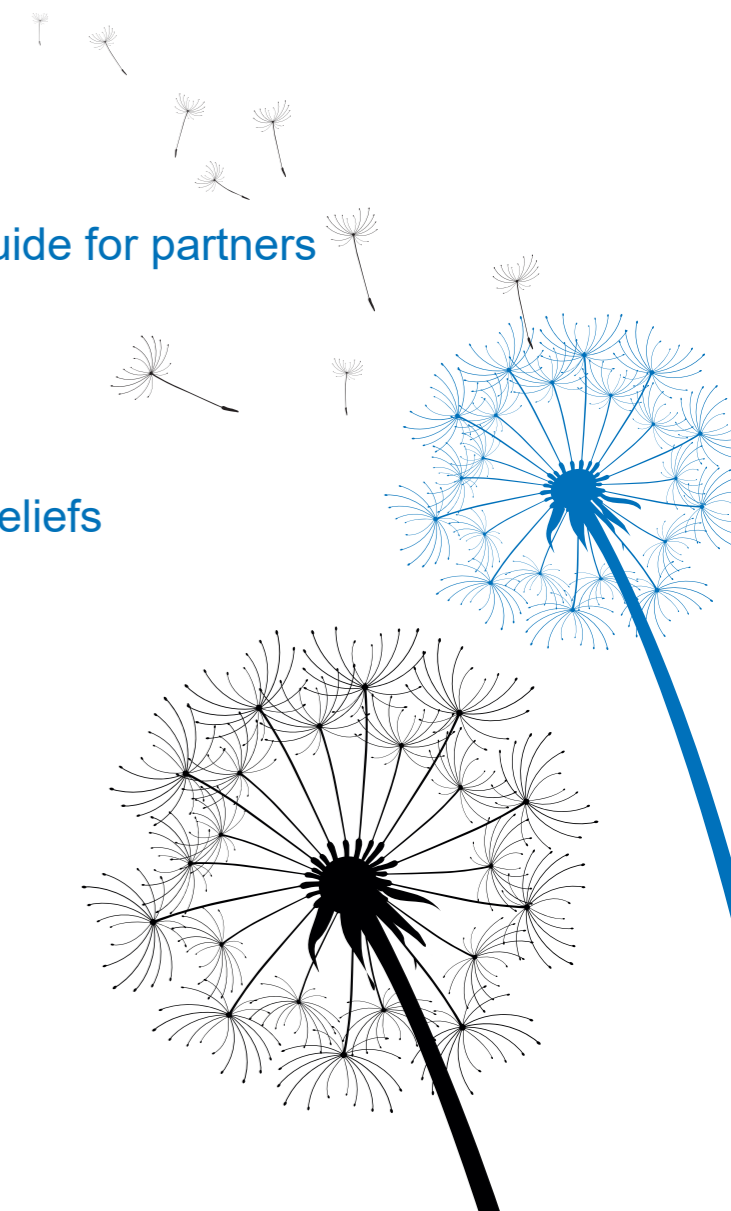
I firmly believe that we can deliver better, person centred care, through thriving teams, in a simplified, less bureaucratic organisation, that forms strong stable and lasting relationships with its partners. And I firmly believe that this will help us to be financially stable for the long term. While difficult decisions will need to be made in the short term, it is the way we make them, in whose interests they are made, and how we go about our work that will be critical to our long term success. Our strategy is our guide in this. You have the absolute commitment from me and the Executive team that we will look to live and lead by it every day.

**James Duncan, Chief Executive**



# Mental Health Self Help Guides

- Abuse
- Alcohol and You
- Anxiety
- Bereavement
- Controlling Anger
- Depression and Low Mood
- Depression and Low Mood - a guide for partners
- Domestic Abuse
- Eating Disorders
- Food for Thought
- Health Anxiety
- Hearing Voices and Disturbing Beliefs
- Obsessions and Compulsions
- Panic
- Post Traumatic Stress
- Postnatal Depression
- Self Harm
- Social Anxiety
- Sleeping Problems
- Stress
- Plus 3 guides for prisoners
  - Anxiety
  - Depression and Low Mood
  - Post Traumatic Stress



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

Also available in BSL, easy read and audio format

# Our new promise to carers

In 2021, we identified that the Trust's Carers' Charter was due for review. A carer-led focus group was set up in January last year to look at this.

The result, our new Carer Promise, was co-designed by carers, carer organisations, and staff. It is a clear and concise statement of the Trust's commitment to carers. The Carer Promise contains four key pledges:



You will be valued, recognised, and involved



We will work together with you to ensure we are all aware of your needs as a carer



We will listen to you, share information with you and be honest when there is information we cannot share



We will talk with you about where you can get further help and information and what you can expect from us

To support this new Carer Promise, the focus group also reviewed all the information we provide to carers. This included the 'Getting to Know You', Common-sense Confidentiality, and Working Together leaflets, and the Triangle of Care principles.

Carers felt that the information we were providing needed some improvement. It often contained a lot of content, which was repeated in different documents.

The group worked with us to design a new Carer Promise information leaflet. This brings together all the information carers need to know into a single, concise document. It outlines what help and support is available, and reminds people of our four Carer Promise pledges.

We also worked with carers to design a carer card. Carers can wear this on a lanyard to help them be easily recognised as a carer when visiting our hospitals. This helps to ensure they are meaningfully engaged and involved in the care and treatment of the person they care for.

The card also entitles them to some benefits, such as free car parking at CNTW sites and discounts in our on-site cafes. This is one of the ways we are recognising and valuing carers for the important role they play.

A leaflet about the carer card is given to carers, so that they can read about the purpose and benefits of registering for a card.

In April 2023, we hosted our first carers conference in a few years (since the COVID pandemic had interrupted plans). More than 300 people joined us at this long-awaited event. It was titled 'The Carer Promise: It's not rocket science!'

Here, we officially launched the Carer Promise, and heard from carers themselves about what is important to them. We also strengthened our links with third sector and partner organisations, such as the Carers Trust.

Since the launch of the Carer Promise, we have distributed 2,836 carer cards. Many carers have taken up the offers of free parking and using their discounts in our cafes.

The Patient and Carer Involvement Service are working hard to spread the word of the Carer Promise to staff throughout CNTW. This includes holding regular online information sessions where staff can learn more.

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



# How we're developing our staff through apprenticeships

The Trust's new strategy, 'With you in mind', has a number of commitments to our staff. One of those commitments is to allow staff the opportunity to learn and progress.

At CNTW Academy, we are responsible for learning and development across the Trust. We cover everything from essential and statutory training, advanced clinical practice and basic numeracy and literacy, through to bespoke in-house accredited courses.

We offer several strands of personal development and career pathway progression, providing a range of educational opportunities for staff.

Apprenticeships make up a large part of the Academy's work. There are currently 372 apprentices enrolled across the Trust.

The team work to provide advice and guidance to staff with regards to career development and can identify professional development opportunities relevant to roles throughout the Trust.

Our largest programme is the Registered Nurse Degree Apprenticeship (RNDA), with 252 people on the internal development programme. We have had 29 external recruits on the programme and a further 23 candidates are due to start in October 2023.

We were the first trust in the region to offer a mental health or learning disability nurse degree apprenticeship to aspiring nurses when we launched the programme in 2021.

In conjunction with the University of Sunderland, the course offers paid employment and education. This is part of our ambition to offer innovative career pathways, helping people develop from novice to expert.

We are always developing our apprenticeship offer and we have recently introduced some exciting new apprenticeships. For example, a cohort of occupational therapy support staff are ready to qualify from our first occupational therapy degree programme. We also have two successful applicants starting an MSc Art Psychotherapy Degree Apprenticeship this year, which will be the first cohort of students in England to do this course.

A key part of CNTW Academy is our work in schools, developing and encouraging our future workforce. In the last 12 months, we have attended over 40 school and college events talking about opportunities in CNTW and across the wider NHS. We also work with other organisations on different initiatives, such as working with the NHS Skills Development Network to promote job opportunities in procurement, finance and informatics, and promoting Health Education England's 'I'm in healthcare' careers programme.

As well as growing our own workforce, we also need to nurture our existing staff, allowing them to flourish in their chosen careers.

Our functional skills programme is available to all staff, ensuring staff have access to Maths and English courses. Learners have told us that having access to these qualifications has helped them improve skills, increased their confidence and supported them to reach their full potential.

The Academy also does work around recruitment and retention and has worked on a pre-employability initiative in partnership with the Trust's lead recruitment and retention nurse. The first programme ran in February 2023 to recruit healthcare assistants to Rose Lodge.

The employability programme is aimed at those looking to get back into work. Candidates on the programme are offered a guaranteed interview, in line with one of the Trust's strategic aims to simplify recruitment processes. The Academy are able to provide training to support with progression to those who are successful. The model can be adapted to any job role in CNTW and NTW Solutions.

We're also award-winning here at the Academy. In February 2023 we won the Employer of the Year Award at the University of Sunderland's annual Apprenticeship Awards. More than 2,000 apprentices nominated their employee or mentor for a range of awards. Several of the nominations praised the Academy, a testament to the team's dedication and support.

**Annette Connor, Apprenticeships and Career Developments Lead**



## “We keep people’s feedback at the forefront of our minds every day” - improving our crisis services

Our crisis teams have been hard at work to improve services, by focussing on what the people we support need most from us.

My team developed a mission statement together. It reads: “Our mission is to provide compassionate and evidence-based care to older adults experiencing mental health crises. We aim to be a trusted resource for our clients, their families, and the community, and to empower older adults to achieve their optimal mental health and wellbeing. We strive to continuously improve our services and to advocate for policies and programs that promote the mental health of older adults.”

To achieve this, we’ve done several things. First, we reviewed the way our multi-disciplinary team (MDT) functions. Each morning we discuss every person that has a planned appointment that day. This encourages team members to communicate with each other, helping everyone stay informed. It means we don’t ask people the same questions, or ask them to repeat their story to different staff. And it allows the whole MDT to have input in the plan for supporting the person.

We have a reflective practice forum every two weeks. Here, the team reflect on the care they’ve provided. We consider what went well, and what others may have done differently. We discuss how our practice may look if we come across a similar case in the future. We also look at the latest research, to make sure our practice is evidence-based.

All the crisis teams within CNTW have worked together to develop a new competency framework and induction. We have focussed on encouraging team members to actively listen to people, show empathy, and acknowledge concerns. This is vital to build trust, and reduce the chances of patients feeling that they need to repeat their story for us to hear them.

When it’s time for people to move on to the care of the Community Treatment Team, we follow a two-week transition period. This gives us time to introduce the person to this new team. We explain and discuss their care plan, so that it is continued without another assessment or repeating work that’s already been done. During the transition we make sure that that patients and their new team feel comfortable and familiar with their care plan.

Finally, every month we review feedback patients and carers give us via the ‘Points of You’ survey, to see how else we can improve. This survey system allows us to easily generate a ‘you said, we did’ poster. We display this in our team as an agreed action plan for the month ahead. This helps us to keep people’s feedback at the forefront of our minds every day.

**Lee Curtis, Clinical Lead for Northumberland Older Adults Crisis Team**



# Working in partnership to improve services

Everyturn Mental Health, founded by Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust (CNTW) in 1986, is now a standalone, national, non-profit organisation, working across several areas of England including the North East. Everyturn provides specialist services on behalf of the NHS and local authorities to help people and communities to manage their mental health and wellbeing.

As a large voluntary, community, and social enterprise (VCSE) organisation, Everyturn is using its range of specialist resources and knowledge to collaborate with various other partners to provide funding, training, and expertise to ensure care is being provided where needed.

That work comes in various forms, whether it's working with an individual at a community level, with a fellow VCSE organisation, or across an entire NHS Trust.

CNTW has worked in partnership with Everyturn since the non-profit's founding in 1986, providing services across all CNTW's areas and coming together to create new ways to improve its services and to help people have easier access to the help that they need.

In 2021, the two organisations came together to launch 'The Waiting List Initiative' – a pilot programme that helped provide non-clinical, emotional, and practical support to people in serious mental health crisis who were waiting for treatment from two of CNTW's Community Treatment Teams (CTTs). The programme produced significant results, with a reduction in waiting lists, decreased pressure on the services, an 84% improvement in the mental health and wellbeing of people supported by the service, as well as being shortlisted at the 2023 HSJ Partnership Awards.

Such was the success of the pilot programme, Everyturn and CNTW are working to launch the waiting list support service in Cumbria, the first initiative of its kind in the county, with a focus on working closely with local voluntary organisations to continue their work in supporting their rural communities and adapting their programme to ensure all needs are met.

I am delighted to continue our partnership with CNTW to deliver our waiting list support service in North Cumbria. We understand the increasing pressures CTTs face, especially in such a unique rural area. By offering this additional support, we can ensure that no one in North Cumbria struggles alone.

This initiative also complements the main aims of the CNTW's 'With you in mind' strategy – helping to bridge the gap between communities and healthcare providers and create trusted, long-term partnerships with those communities, by providing and adapting to the changing needs of the people, ensuring that the care provided is always sustainable.

Everyturn's role as an 'anchor' VCSE organisation has seen the team work closely with the NHS and local authorities to provide these community initiatives with the appropriate funding, training, and expertise to ensure they can continue to provide the necessary support.

Working with the NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB) and CNTW, we have also been able to support community projects across Northumberland to secure funding through its VCSE Mental Health Alliance.

Since the VCSE Alliance's implementation, it has provided £134k in funding to create a network of over 80 North East charities, organisations, and individuals – helping people and carers to access services in their own communities and ensure they have the tools necessary to look after their own wellbeing.

Such is the scope of the VCSE Alliance, there are many organisations that offer different methods to support their communities. One of these initiatives is Empire Boxing based in Blyth, a community project that helps create a safe place for people to improve their mental health through fitness.



Thanks to the VCSE Alliance, Empire Boxing was able to launch and run its Passport to Wellness Project, which is focused on reaching people living in mental health crisis and supporting them to stay well in the community. Myself and the CNTW Chief Executive, James Duncan, took part in a session to see the life-changing impact that the funding has on the community.

Les Welsh, Founder of the Empire School of Boxing said: "I've seen so many people from all walks of life

enter this gym, and everyone's benefitted from it. Not only have they seen great physical health improvements, but improvements in their mental health too. It's really made the difference to a lot of people and I'm so proud to have helped so many."

I am really proud of the work that has been supported through the VCSE Mental Health Alliance in Northumberland. By using our position and close partnership with the ICB and the NHS, we have been able to facilitate some incredible programmes and projects on a community level to provide much-needed support to unreached communities.

The work of Everyturn Mental Health, CNTW, and the wider ICB shows the impact that partnerships have, especially the role of an 'anchor' VCSE – not only working with local people and organisations on the ground in the communities but innovating and delivering these services to ensure the right help is available for those people who need it.



To learn more about the services Everyturn Mental Health provides, visit: [www.everyturn.org](http://www.everyturn.org)

**Adam Crampsie, CEO of Everyturn Mental Health**



# Family Ambassadors

We both work as Family Ambassadors in a 'tier four' mental health inpatient ward. We support the families and carers of children who are admitted here. These are specialised inpatient units, where young people with more severe mental health and neurodevelopmental conditions can be assessed and treated.

We were the first Family Ambassadors recruited into CNTW, joining the Trust in late 2022. We have both had our own journeys through Children and Young Peoples' Services (CYPS). Supporting, championing and fighting for our children daily, we both understand just how exhausting, confusing and isolating it can be as a family member.



Now, we use all our lived experience to empathise with families going through similar things, and support them in any way we can. We want to give hope to families that there is a future for them, although it may not look like the one they had imagined.

We empower families and carers to have an active role in their child's care, amplifying their voice. We see parents as partners. Wherever possible, no decision about a child's care is made without their involvement.

We're here to support families right the way through from their child's admission to discharge. We help them understand what to expect at each stage of this journey, particularly how inpatient units work and the various systems and processes they'll come into contact with. Clinical staff don't always have the time to meet with families and support them as much as they would like to, which is why our roles are so important.

Sometimes that means helping families to access information, and 'jargon busting' to make it clearer for them. We help them to understand who does what - both on the unit and in any other teams working with the young person. And we support them to prepare for important meetings and debrief afterwards.

We also make sure families and carers know their rights when it comes to things like the Care Programme Approach, Care and Education Treatment Reviews, tribunal, and Education Care and Health Plans, and the rights and benefits they're entitled to as carers.

We advocate for families to be involved in discharge planning wherever possible. We can then work with families for up to four weeks after the young person is discharged from our unit. This helps to ensure their care plan is being followed, and that the family feels supported during this difficult transition period.

All of this empowers families to be part of planning a young person's care and treatment (with their consent, of course).

We're often the liaison between the unit and families. We focus on making sure communication is clear and building good working relationships, understanding, and empathy. We can help other staff to understand the role families and carers can play as part of the care team, and the benefits this brings for everyone.

We offer a safe space for families to offload and process their situations. This is especially important for families whose children are in out of area placements, are transitioning between different units, or even moving from childrens' to adult services. These can be very stressful times.

We're currently working on improving the family visiting rooms, to make them less clinical and more homely. We're even starting to hold family events to bring people together, such as a monthly 'chill and chat' for parent carers.

We both feel very privileged to be in our roles. Although it can be emotionally challenging at times, seeing that we have made a positive difference to the lives of the families we have supported is very rewarding.

**Rachel Noble and Katie Watson, Family Ambassadors in Specialist Children and Young People Services (CYPS)**

# Making sure everyone gets the information they need, in a way they can understand

We need to make sure that everyone is given information that they can easily understand and apply to their life. When we succeed in this, it can be lifechanging. Good information helps people make better decisions about their health and take part in planning their own care.

You might have heard people talk about 'health literacy'. This is about someone's ability to find, understand, and use health information. Everybody has the right to receive trustworthy information in a way that they can understand and use.

The North of England has some of the highest levels in the country of adults who struggle to understand written information. And many of the people we support need extra help to access information, such as people with a learning disability or dementia.

Information that is difficult to find or understand can damage people's trust in healthcare professionals and services. And it can put people at more risk of illnesses which could have been avoided.

CNTW has a policy which we follow to produce good-quality, accessible information for patients, carers and the public. Staff in the Patient Information Centre team are always on hand to provide advice.

But all of us - from staff working on reception desks, to those providing specialist clinical care - have a responsibility to give people information that can be easily understood.

## Our 'top tips' are:

Put things in **plain, simple words**. Avoid jargon and acronyms, and explain medical terms.

When you're explaining something, check the person you're talking to has understood. Try the 'teach back' and 'chunk and check' techniques. These help you to **check that you've explained something clearly**, in a way that person can understand. (A search online will bring up great examples of these simple but effective techniques).

When creating a resource, involve the people it's aimed at from the start. Make it easy for service users and carers to give feedback on it throughout the process. (This is a key part of our policy on production of accessible information).

Display written information so it's as **clear and easy to follow** as possible. Avoid fancy fonts, writing in all capital letters, and long chunks of text. Using sub-headings, bullet-points and short paragraphs will help people absorb the information.

## Work for CNTW and want to know more?

Our staff intranet has a really helpful Health Literacy Toolbox full of more information and resources to help you provide clear, accessible information to the people you work with. You'll find it under the 'Policies and Resources' section.

**Karen O'Rourke, Patient Information Centre Manager**





## Helping people out of long-term segregation

Donna just popped to the local shops. She bought a drink, a bar of chocolate and a magazine. She chatted to the shopkeeper, and petted a little dog tied up outside. Donna's life is quite different now from how it's been for the last two years.

Until recently, Donna lived in a locked room. For two years she's been on one side of a door, with staff on the other side. The door was opened to pass food and drink through.

Donna struggles with being close to other people. This meant that sometimes she'd get so upset that she would throw things, grab at staff, and hurt herself. Because she posed a risk to other people, Donna was moved to a locked room. Staff didn't mean to do her harm, but the message this gave to Donna was that this is how she had to live to keep herself and other people safe. Staff struggled to work with Donna, and as her world got smaller, her reputation and her distress just got bigger.

Living alone and being stopped from freely mixing with other people for a long time is known as 'long term segregation'. Under the Mental Health Act Code of Practice, it can be used when an individual presents a serious, chronic risk of harm to other people, and other ways of supporting them have failed to reduce these risks.

But supporting someone in this way (even if they prefer to live like this) carries a significant risk of harm as well. All humans need connection with others. Living in isolation has long-term impacts on a person's psychological and physical wellbeing. It breaches their human rights and does not help them recover. It also harms the teams supporting them in this way.

HOPE(S) stands for: Harnessing the system and engage the person; Opportunities for positive structured activity in an enabling environment; Preventative and protective factors; and Enhancing both the coping skills of the individuals and members of staff. The (S) represents the wider system, which needs to be managed and developed to provide support throughout all stages of the approach.

HOPE(S) is a way of working that was identified in the CQC's 'Out of Sight: Who Cares' report in 2018. Following this, NHS England commissioned the national HOPE(S) team.

CNTW has adopted the HOPE(S) model in 2020 to reduce the number of people living in long-term segregation. We are committed to completely ending our use of long-term segregation.

Last year, CNTW created a specific role within the Trust to continue the work of the national team. That's my role, as HOPE(S) Lead for the Trust. It involves working with clinical teams in the Trust, helping to bring people - like Donna - out of long-term segregation, and trying to avoid it being used in the first place.

So far we have managed to significantly reduce the number of people in our care living in segregation. We have supported teams to find different ways to support people when they are really distressed, which don't require long-term isolation.

The HOPE(S) approach helps a team to unpick where the situation has become 'stuck'. Then they can customise the work that needs doing to these problem areas, gradually introducing goals to overcome these barriers. We work at the pace of the individual living in segregation, with them at the heart of everything that happens.

I took on this role because I felt challenged by some of the care we were delivering. It seemed like a way to make a big difference to the lives of some of the most complex and vulnerable people in our care.

Over 600 members of our staff (including our Governors, Board and Executive team) have now received training in HOPE(S) to help them to understand why we need to think differently about segregation. Staff have described the training as inspiring, giving them a whole new approach to challenging decisions and finding different, less harmful ways to care for people.

Through the HOPE(S) model, the lives of many people like Donna have been transformed. She's able to live more freely and connect with other people. Her distress hasn't gone away completely, and it probably never will. But the team who support her are more confident in finding different ways to help her. She's beginning to plan her future, living independently in the community.

**Jo Brackley, HOPE(S) Lead**

# Improving care with human rights training

As NHS staff, we have a responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of people within our services. The positive and safe team have been involved in the development of awareness level training around human rights. The team supported the initiative through helping develop the training package and are taking a lead on the roll out across inpatient services.

A cascade model is being used and the Talk 1st cohorts have provided the ideal starting point. Training is being delivered to representatives from each ward as they attend cohorts. They are then tasked with cascading the training across their teams and feeding back at the next cohort.

This cascade approach has gotten off to a great start with very positive feedback from those who have received the training. The scenario-based training package has led to insightful reflections on practice and staff feeling more confident in using human rights based decision making. Recipients of the training have said that it has made them more aware of their need to protect people's human rights and they felt more confident to challenge when they identified human rights being at risk.

Once training is complete, participants have an overview of the articles of the Human Rights Act and are aware of the difference between absolute and non-absolute rights. Scenarios are used to apply a three-stage test to decisions. The three-stage test asks people to consider is the decision lawful, legitimate and proportionate. This supports staff when faced with the many challenging decisions they have to make on a daily basis. Participants gain an appreciation of how the Human Rights Act underpins CNTW Trust values and other legislation we work within, such as the Mental Health Act and the Mental Capacity Act.

Teams are being supported with resources for reference including access to a tool for staff 'Embedding Human Rights in Mental Health Services' developed by the British Institute of Human Rights and Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV).

It is hoped that an increased awareness of human rights across services will support a reduction in the use of restrictive interventions and an improvement in the quality of care offered with human rights at the heart of all decision making and actions.

**Rebecca Trevarrow, Advanced Occupational Therapist, Positive and Safe Care**

# Using feedback to improve staff experience



A key theme from the Trust's strategy is about giving staff a voice. One of the commitments is to enable managers to understand what it's like to do the jobs of those in their team.

There are two main ways we gather information:

## **National NHS Staff Survey**

## **National Quarterly Pulse Survey**

By allowing people to have their say we can continue to provide the support our staff need. This feedback can inform changes, both local and national, to improve the experience of our people and our patients.

## **National NHS Staff Survey**

The national NHS Staff Survey is a useful way of measuring what life is like for NHS staff. It focuses on the following key elements aligned to the People Promise:

- We are compassionate and inclusive
- We are recognised and rewarded
- We each have a voice that counts
- We are safe and healthy
- We are always learning
- We work flexibly
- We work as a team

Our most recent NHS Staff Survey saw some very encouraging results. We scored above average across all themes in comparison to other mental health and learning disability trusts. 85.9% felt their role makes a difference to patients, while 87% said they enjoyed working with colleagues in their team. A large number also said they felt the care of patients and service users was a top priority for the organisation.

Each year, we use the feedback given in the annual NHS Staff Survey to develop actions that can have a big impact. This is why it's so important for us to hear from as many staff as possible.

**We have made several changes in recent years based on feedback from the NHS Staff Survey.**

We heard some staff groups, particularly those who identify as female, have a disability, or come from culturally diverse backgrounds, felt they didn't have the same opportunities as their colleagues.

To improve this...

- We piloted a 'Springboard for Women' programme, aimed at building confidence and helping women think about their next steps. Around 20 women have been supported to take part and plans are underway for a second programme.
- We are planning two leadership development programmes for staff with a disability.
- We launched a pilot of 'Inclusive Mentoring' where staff mentor board members on matters of diversity in our workplace, which will help strengthen our cultural awareness.
- Staff told us they would like to be more involved in decision making.
- We invited staff to participate in shaping our future strategy through the 'We are CNTW' campaign (initially called 'CNTW2030'), by giving their views on the things that matter most. More than 2,000 comments were received via focus groups, surveys and team discussions, which have helped shape the heart of the strategy.
- Staff said they felt the Trust could do more to ensure it is an inclusive and respectful place to work.

- We set up a Respect Group and launched the Give Respect, Get Respect campaign. The campaign encompasses work to make CNTW a great place to work and receive care.
- We heard from staff that they feel fairly well supported with their health and wellbeing but that more could be done.
- We developed the 'Health and Wellbeing star' to ensure we support staff in a holistic way and are using this approach to develop future wellbeing campaigns and initiatives.
- We also developed the Thrive website to ensure that information and support for staff is easily accessible, anywhere, at any time.

**The Quarterly Pulse Survey**

The Quarterly Pulse Survey runs three times a year and provides an opportunity for staff to share their experiences and feelings on a more regular basis.

Again, this has informed a number of key changes as a result of feedback. We launched a new community offer with Northumberland Community Bank and ran a financial wellbeing week in June 2023 which offered practical support on things like debt and credit scores.

We have developed a new guide to 'stay conversations' to help retain staff. This helps us understand what keeps staff working at CNTW and what makes them want to leave, rather than waiting for data at exit interviews.

Staff want to be able to have a good work/life balance. We have supported flexible working across different roles and different areas of the Trust. As part of this, we have launched training for managers to increase their confidence and knowledge in supporting staff who need to work flexibly.

We have changed our employee assistance programme provider to Vivup to improve the range of support available. Staff are able to access multiple discounts and savings.

Both surveys have resulted in a number of changes across the organisation and that's why it's so important for staff to share their views and for us to listen and respond to feedback.

**Sarah Kelly, Workforce Development Manager**

# Raising the profile of social work at CNTW

We have around 130 qualified social workers working in various roles across the Trust.

I joined the Trust in April 2022 as principal social worker, a post that was brand new. This post was created to establish social work governance and senior leadership across CNTW.

Since then, we have been working hard to raise the profile of social work within the Trust.

We have established a leadership team by recruiting social workers delivering operational leadership. Victoria Pickles has been appointed as consultant social worker and we have also appointed a social worker into an AHP (allied health professionals) associate director role in Cumbria, who will support the development of social work across the locality.

We are currently working on plans to deliver quality support for our social workers, including continuing professional development and introducing frameworks that are required to support social workers, such as the assessed and supported year in employment (AYSE).

Having social workers as part of multi-disciplinary teams can be hugely beneficial for patients. They can address underlying social detriments that significantly impact mental health and wellbeing. They do this by applying legal frameworks to support safe and effective practice. Social workers can play a pivotal role in increasing people's social capital, which can be an effective way of improving the health outcomes of our patients, at both individual and community levels.

We have also supported a number of services to develop social work posts, most recently we have worked with the Beadnell Mother and Baby Unit to appoint their first social worker into the team.

Training the next generation of social workers is one of our top priorities. We have built excellent strategic partnerships with universities across the region. As part of that work, we have accepted students on placement and are creating ongoing training modules for qualified social workers.

Our work with higher education also focuses on developing practice educators and we have committed to training 10 practice educators a year.

One of our Trainee Practice Educators, Naomi Carroll, who is a Perinatal Community Practitioner, received excellent feedback from our partners about the quality of placement and training provided. Naomi's student has since been offered their first job as a qualified social worker within the Trust and will be a welcome asset to our ever-growing professional group.

One significant advancement of practice education within the Trust has been the recent partnership with Think Ahead and Middlesex University. Think Ahead works with the NHS and local authorities to widen the pool of talent entering mental health social work and to create a community of advocates for social approaches in both mental health services and across society.

This collaboration has introduced an innovative approach to training aiming to enhance the quality of education for social work students. It allows for the application between theoretical knowledge, legal frameworks and practice. The practice placements that CNTW can offer will play a crucial role as the students move through to Newly Qualified Social Workers and take up positions in the Trust during their assessed and supported year in employment (AYSE).

We currently have four trainees on the programme who will be working across the Trust's forensic services.

**Simon Owens, Principal Social Worker**



# Changing the way we think about policy

I was asked at the end of 2022 to review the policy for writing letters to service users. Lots of work had been happening around the Trust linking to the review of this policy. Access services in Sunderland and South Tyneside have been leading the way with the 'write to me' agenda. Other services in the Trust were also writing to the service user and copying in the GP rather than the other way around. Great examples of 'write to me' can be seen around CNTW. The communications team have been working on health literacy with people from many parts of CNTW to make the written word more accessible to staff, service users and carers within CNTW. Suzanne Wilson and Paul Sams have also been working on rights-based communication. The evidence from this work clearly shows how things are communicated and how people receive information is linked to a person's ability to make choices to be and to stay healthier.

I started to think about how to bring all of this work together into a policy for writing letters to service users. I needed contributions from staff to make the policy easy to use and contributions from service users and carers to make sure the policy meets everyone's needs. My occupational therapist brain started to see just how many little steps it would take to co-develop an updated version of this policy.



Fortunately, a colleague I really respect suggested Jen Cribbes as a valuable person who could support this work. How right they were. With Jen's organisational skills and ability to draw on her vast knowledge of CNTW, we were able to come up with some great ideas. Co-developing an updated policy quickly started to happen.

During the co-development of this policy, it quickly became apparent that the wide range of service user and carer contributors alongside staff all had similar hopes for the policy. The hope was that the policy would be written with all the same high standards that the policy asks staff to be aware of when writing a letter. The aim was to 'be the change we wanted to see' and write an easy to read, concise, accessible policy. A policy which helps staff write easy to read, concise, accessible, and compassionate letters, with intent. Questions encouraging curiosity were agreed to be the best way to ask staff to consider the reader's needs, rather than tell staff to simply do more. Someone had the innovative idea of modelling the policy in the format of a letter, to further encourage the policy to be easy to read. It quickly became the group's policy. A co-produced policy. A policy with everyone in mind.

At the time of writing, the policy is onto its second draft. It highlights some of the challenges around getting to know a person's needs and arranging to get know those needs. It has been highlighted that the policy name might not represent that best practice of writing to service users. What should the policy be named? What will a co-produced equality impact assessment look like and achieve?

While the format has been widely welcomed, we presented at the Service User and Carer Reference Group in July, the policy does not fit the Trust-wide template for policies. The policy for writing policies is due for review itself and the hope is that there are enough people in agreement that writing policies that people can and will read, will take innovation. We need a policy which agrees with, listens to and starts to make CNTW's strategic ambitions happen, in ways that share CNTW's values.

With you in mind, an innovative, concise, and clear strategy, needs policies to bind us together, to work together with empathy, care, and compassion for one and other. We need ambitious and aspirational policies, that respect staff needs. Policies that people can read and want to read. With you in mind says, "we need to change" and says, "Our opportunity is to think differently, to be bold and radical in our thinking."

The policy will bring together all of the work which has been happening around CNTW and will be in simple language.

Together, we will all have been bold and innovative though. The radical thing might be that in an organisation of this size, we had the courage to co-develop something which was ahead of its time. Something which has to add to the conversation about having policies people can and want to read. Quite bold. Quite radical. Quite innovative. Policies with compassionate aims. Policies with you in mind.

Or perhaps, this 'Sharing letters with Service users' policy will be one of the bold, ambitious, aspirational, innovations happening in 2023 in CNTW, like this strategy. With you in mind. These are not just words on a page, they are words with an intent.

**Denise Cowans, Associate AHP Director/Policy Author  
The CNTW Letter Writing Policy Working Group**

# A new look for our award winning self help guides

Our self-help guides have been providing support and advice for over 24 years. They say 'knowledge is power' and our guides have been instrumental in helping people to understand their health conditions and offer support when people are vulnerable.

We all need information we can trust, particularly in this day and age of fake news and misinformation. We pride ourselves that our resources are clear, accurate, evidence based and easy to use. Our guides have been written with the support of NHS clinical psychologists, service users, carers and other NHS professionals, so users can be assured and have confidence in what they are reading.

Our self-help guides cover 23 different mental health topics, including anxiety, eating disorders and sleeping problems. The guides have been recognised several times by the British Medical Association's Patient Information Awards and have been downloaded from our website on a global scale.

However, we can always do more to improve, so with our service users in mind, we are embarking on an exciting journey for a new home for our website.

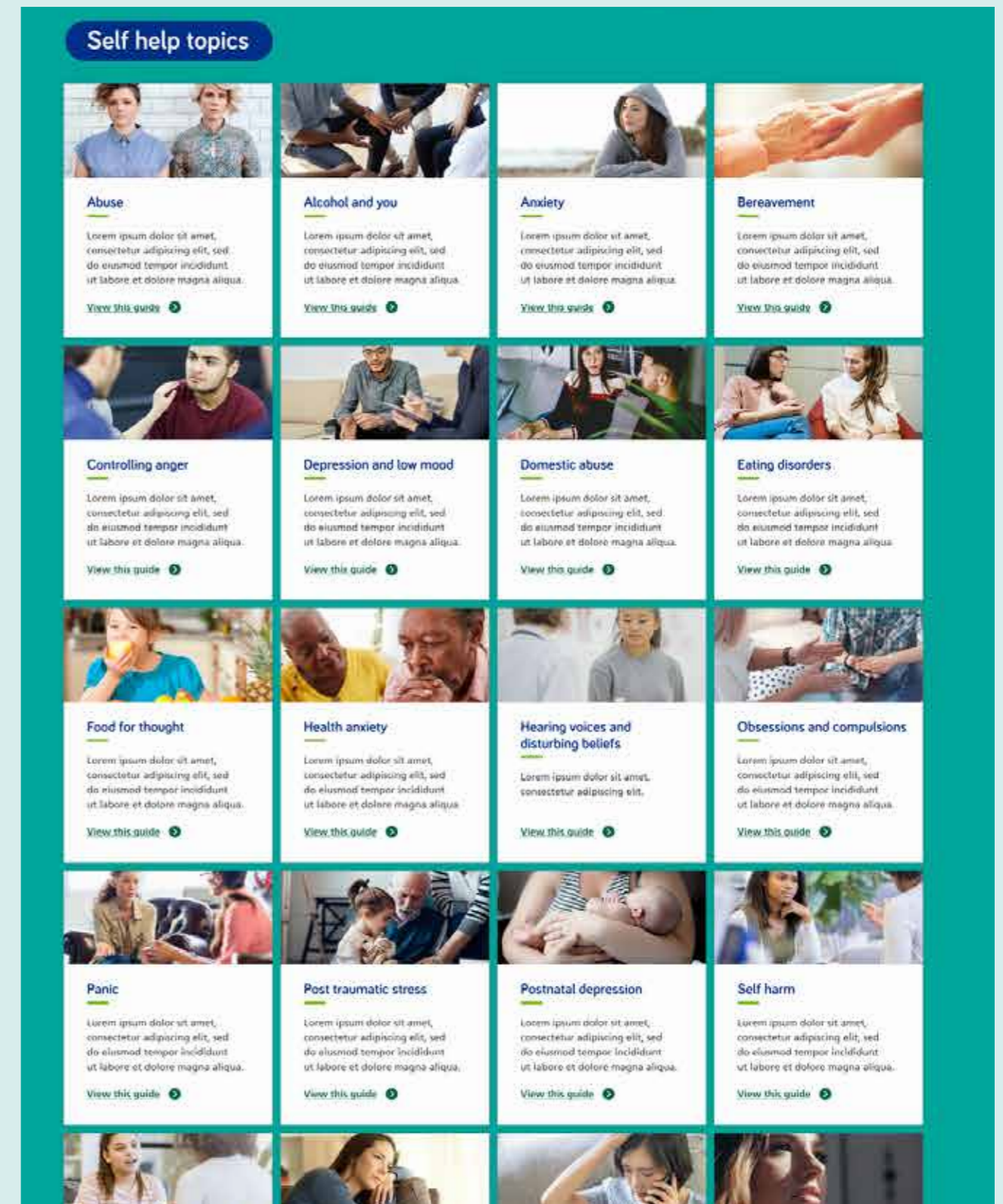
For many years, our self-help guides have been hosted in a bookcase format available online in a pdf format. But times change, the way we use information has changed and the way we access information has changed, so we need to adapt and continue to be there for those who need us.

Earlier this year we commissioned a new website to be built for our self help guides which is now in build and will be launched towards the end of 2023.

The new site will have so much more functionality and be easier to use than previously. You will be able to use whatever device you wish, whether that be a PC, tablet or phone to access the guides, download them, print them and even make notes on them.

We're excited to see how this new development progresses and we really hope that our guides continue to make a difference to those who need them.

**Adele Joicey, Head of Communications**







## NTW Solutions – supporting better care

Since I became Managing Director people have asked me if I am enjoying the job, and of course I love it, but it really does feel like the most challenging time to be taking on the role. The headwinds we are facing are like nothing else I've seen in my 30 years in the NHS.

Not only are we recovering from the pandemic, we have faced significant inflation pressures which the war in Ukraine has only made worse. Everyone is battling the cost of living crisis and we have spells where people are doing demanding physical jobs during heatwaves. The world around us just feels different and many of these things have cast a shadow which will be with us for some time to come.

We can get so caught up with all of the challenges that we can sometimes forget about all of the positives. Due to our team of incredible and dedicated people in NTW Solutions we have continued to provide high quality services over the last year, our company has continued to do well and it's a good time to reflect on the positive impact we have had.

We exist to support better care and one of our strategic priorities is to be the collaborative partner of choice. We've expanded what we deliver to CNTW over the past year, taking on facilities services and outpatient pharmacy services in Cumbria, and taking on provision of Estates services at Walkergate Park with the PFI contractor. We're also now responsible for managing medical devices across the Trust and have seen an increase in clinical teams using our digital dictation services. We are continually growing and delivering our aims to provide high quality support services and in some cases freeing up clinical time to care.

We're front and centre in tackling the climate emergency and given the vast majority of our carbon footprint comes from operating our buildings, it is great to see the Sycamore Unit at Northgate Park achieving the highest possible environmental rating. We're greening our fleet of vehicles, including our lease cars, and we provide the charging infrastructure on site and at people's homes, all of which has been upgraded using the latest technology. We're helping people make a difference too with reusable cups and food containers in our cafés.

With people facing tough times it's more important than ever to be a great and inclusive place to work. We've focussed on helping people with the cost of living crisis and being a Living Wage employer plays a huge part in that, but we've also been helping people find support and help with financial issues. We're on a journey with equality, diversity and inclusion and like many organisations we are realising that we don't have all the answers. That's why we're working with people who can help us like North East based Miss Menopause, and we've introduced our Menopause Protocol to support people in the workplace.

We continue to invest in apprentices across the company, from Estates to Finance, with great success and it's so important to invest in the next generation of talent. Our Procurement Team has won awards for its work with Project Choice, supporting people with disabilities or learning difficulties into the workplace.

We have achieved a lot over the past year and have so much to be proud of despite the challenges thrown at us. If you'd like to know more, you can read our own annual review on our website - [ntwsolutions.co.uk](https://ntwsolutions.co.uk)

I just want to say a huge thanks to everyone at NTW Solutions who makes all of this possible, and everyone in CNTW who supports the work we do. And here's to what we can achieve together over the next year as times of adversity can lead to great opportunities.

**Tracey Sopp, Managing Director**



# Maintaining compassion at work

Schwartz Rounds are a confidential, staff-only reflective space. All kinds of staff - clinical and non-clinical, students and trainees - come together to discuss and reflect on the emotional impacts of our work in healthcare.

They are named after Kenneth Schwartz, a healthcare lawyer from Boston, USA who died from lung cancer in 1995. He wrote a moving newspaper article during his treatment, reflecting on the many treatments he was receiving. He wrote that it was that the human acts of kindness and compassion which, in his words, “made the unbearable, bearable.”

His legacy was to set up the Schwartz Centre for Compassionate Healthcare. The centre supports staff to maintain this all-important compassion in their work with patients.

Schwartz Rounds were then introduced to the UK in 2009. CNTW adopted them in 2016. We're one of more than 200 organisations which now run regular Schwartz Rounds. So far, we have facilitated 41 Rounds.

Our Trust recognises that Schwartz Rounds can help staff build and maintain resilience, in the face of sometimes overwhelming challenges.

Each Round is facilitated by two trained CNTW staff. They last for 1 hour and are based on a theme. They can be held in person, or virtually. Each Round begins with a panel of three or four staff offering some brief, pre-prepared personal reflections about their work. The discussion is then opened to everyone to comment and reflect.

The theme for our most recent Round in July 2023 was ‘Different Not Less: The emotional impact of neurodivergence and finding our place at work’. Our three fantastic panellists were a Community Practitioner in Children and Young Peoples’ Services, a Consultant Clinical Psychologist and Associate Director, and a Peer Supporter.

Attendees described it as “inspiring”, “thought provoking”, “uplifting” and “insightful.” One person said that Schwartz Rounds “motivate me to always be reflective, empathetic and open-minded, as you never know what someone is managing underneath.” Another person added, “There was a sense of community and understanding. This really hit home.”

Other topics we have focused on during this year included: ‘Keeping it all going (or not) during Covid: reflecting on the emotional impact on ourselves before, during and after COVID’, ‘The price tag of compassion: reflecting on the emotional impact of working in the Children and Young People’s Service’ and ‘Understanding me, understanding you: reflections from staff working in the NHS from an international background’.

We’ve also facilitated joint Schwartz Rounds in collaboration with colleagues at other organisations. Most recently we worked with Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. Our team of Schwartz Facilitators have gained a strong local and national reputation for providing high quality, well-received Rounds.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic we held all Schwartz Rounds in-person. We know how much the staff who attended valued these face-to-face events. We hope to return to hosting more Rounds in this way soon. However, holding sessions online has its advantages too. More staff can attend without the difficulties of scheduling and travelling to the event. Our online Rounds have allowed a wider range of staff from across the Trust’s footprint to get involved. Some online Rounds have have more than 300 staff attending.

This year we have had the opportunity to add some new faces to our facilitator team: Daniel Briggs, Diane Conway, Becky Gill and Kevin Meares. Allan Brownrigg has moved to a new Trust, but he continues to be involved in Schwartz Rounds there.

We have exciting plans for developing and further embedding Schwartz Rounds at CNTW. We hope to do some more in-depth research and evaluation of rounds, especially on the impact they have on staff wellbeing. We will continue to run collaborative rounds with colleagues in our neighbouring NHS Trusts. And we’re offering supportive, reflective spaces for our CNTW colleagues in an ever-changing healthcare landscape.

We want to thank the amazing staff who have helped us organise, promote and design this year’s Schwartz Rounds, and we look forward to many more next year!

**Philip Goldblatt, Consultant Clinical Psychologist and CNTW Schwartz Clinical Lead, and the Schwartz Team**





# The 'little extras' that make a big difference to people's treatment and recovery

Every year, staff and members of the public help us to go the extra mile for the people we support, by raising money for The SHINE Fund.

The SHINE Fund is the Trust's official charity. Money raised is used to provide those 'little extras' that can make a big difference to people's treatment and recovery.

The charity has funded a wide range of those 'little extras' this year, including: specialist chairs for one of our older peoples' wards in Cumbria; a pool table for Willow View (an intensive rehabilitation and recovery ward in Newcastle); several pizza ovens and barbeques to help wards enjoy the warmer days; as well as music players, books, and even manicure tables.

But, thanks to people's generosity, some 'little extras' we've been able to provide are not so little!

One of the largest investments from the charity this year was £23,700 to create a new Cycle Hub at St George's Park in Northumberland, and purchase several bikes. This has enabled patients to enjoy some time away from the ward, exercising while exploring the hospital grounds.



The feedback has been amazing. One patient described it as "the best money the hospital has ever spent!" They added, "I haven't been able to ride a bike since I was a child, and I have loved having the chance to use a bike whilst in hospital." Another person said, "Being able to cycle whilst in hospital has helped me with my confidence. I feel free when I'm using the bike."

SHINE also provided our forensic services with funds to improve their allotment in Newcastle. This allotment makes a huge difference to the lives of patients who have been in contact with the criminal justice system. It provides people with an opportunity to socialise, enjoy physical activity outdoors, learn new skills, grow their confidence, and be part of a community.

Patients are always thinking of new ways to improve the allotment, and they take the lead on putting these ideas into practice. This year the SHINE Fund provided money for them to buy new gardening tools, paint outbuildings, lay gravel in the orchard, and add new raised beds. The funding from SHINE will also cover the allotment site fees for the next year.



Before



After

Reflecting on what the revamped allotment space meant to them, one patient said: "It makes a big difference in my life and allows me to meet other people every week and feel part of the community." Another added, "I feel a lot of the ownership towards the community allotment...it's helped me fill my time doing something productive and peaceful."

The SHINE Fund also helps us to make Christmas a special time for the people we support. Last year we funded a 'family fun day' for families being supported by our Cumbria Perinatal Team. It also provided Christmas Eve boxes for young people at Ferndene in Northumberland (an inpatient assessment and treatment service for young people with severe and/or complex mental disorders). And every inpatient has a present to open on Christmas Day thanks to SHINE Fund donors.



As this magazine goes to print, several of our dedicated fundraisers will probably be feeling very sore but accomplished, after running and cycling in aid of the charity! Occupational Therapist Paul Wales will have just finished a two week, 1,300 mile cycle from Newcastle to Nice in France. Paul has taken on this challenge to raise £5,000 for The SHINE Fund and Brain Tumour Research. Several people also completed the Great North Run on behalf of the SHINE Fund.

We'd like to extend a huge 'thank you' to everyone who has supported our fundraising efforts this year; you have made all of this possible.

**Ailsa Miller, Patients Finance and Cashiers Manager at CNTW who oversees The SHINE Fund**



To support The SHINE Fund and find out more, visit [www.cntw.nhs.uk/SHINE](http://www.cntw.nhs.uk/SHINE) or scan the QR code

# How peer support ties into the new strategy's commitments

Peer support has had a long and honourable history. Patients have always provided support to each other, and run informal self-help groups.

Our peer support workforce offers unique insights and guidance to our staff, patients and carers. They now work across teams covering mental health, learning disability, neurodevelopmental conditions, gender dysphoria, neurological disabilities, and more. These staff offer unique expertise from real-life experiences, which cannot be learned through theory or books.

Lived experience played a key part in the design of our new Trust Strategy. We listened to what matters most to service users and carers, and how we can achieve this together.

Now, peer support and lived experience will help us deliver the commitments in the strategy:

## Building connections with service users and carers

Peer Supporters share their experience to build connections with service users and carers. They know how they feel, because they've been there too. Those shared experiences help people to feel understood and accepted.

People with lived experience can bring a different perspective to services. They can help to pinpoint issues which others might not spot. They create opportunities for staff to be curious, learn and grow, and give us the courage to try new things.

We have also introduced Carer Peer Supporters and Family Ambassadors. With their support, Carers and families can connect with someone who shares their experience. They can be linked up with local support services, and meet others who are in a similar situation. They also ensure that families and carers are involved in their loved one's journey through CNTW.

## Peer Support as a career path

Our Peer Supporters are incredibly passionate about their role. They use their experiences to help other people, helping the Trust to build and maintain an inclusive culture.

We support our lived experience workforce through values-based recruitment, specialist induction and training, and regular supervision. There is also wellbeing support developed and delivered by people with lived experience. We are committed to making sure Peer Support is a career path people can pursue. Education and continued development are offered to help staff reach their full potential.

## Supporting our partners and communities

Many of our Peer Supporters spend 20% of their time working into local Recovery Colleges. Recovery Colleges provide a programme of free courses and workshops to help people improve their wellbeing. Peers who have lived experience develop and deliver these courses. We work closely with the Recovery College Collaborative. This brings together the eight Recovery Colleges across our region to share good practice.

Sharing your lived experience can offer someone the gift of hope. Our services are bringing together the expertise of healthcare professionals with the expertise gained through lived experience. The result is growth, inclusion, compassion, empathy and understanding.

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



# “Nothing about us without us”

## Developing our new Learning Disability Awareness Training

All CNTW staff can now attend our new learning disability awareness training. It's open to all staff, whether they work in a clinical or a non-clinical role.

This new training course was one of the first tasks given to me when I joined the CNTW Academy team. Last year, a CQC inspection highlighted that we needed to offer more training to ensure staff had the right skills and knowledge to meet people's needs.

And in May 2022, Parliament passed the Health and Care Act 2022. This requires that all health and social care staff must receive training on learning disability.

We have already delivered training on learning disability to more than 900 staff. This training has already become required for staff working in many of our inpatient wards, and will soon be mandatory for many more staff.

I began developing the training package last year. I based it on Health Education England's Core Capabilities Framework for Supporting People with a Learning Disability.

CNTW provides specialist services for people with a learning disability. So, we have many learning disability nurses and other specialist staff across the organisation. But the majority of our colleagues don't have any formal training about what a learning disability is, and how to communicate with and support people.

The sessions are also an important chance for staff who have had training on learning disability in the past to refresh this. They can gain more up-to-date knowledge, and perhaps a different perspective. Even staff who've worked in learning disability services for 20+ years have told me they've got something out of the training.

The content of the training package has changed a lot in the last 12 months. From the start, the sessions included videos of people with a learning disability to ensure their voices were heard in the sessions. But this is only a small step on the journey towards true co-production.

The Core Capabilities Framework echoes the recommendations from the Learning from Lives and Deaths of People with a Learning Disability and Autistic People programme (LeDeR). Both emphasise that learning disability awareness training should be delivered together with people with a learning disability. CNTW needed to do more.

This is when we began working with Sunderland People First to develop the training. Sunderland People First is a Community Interest Company whose focus is on improving the lives of people with a learning disability and autistic people. I worked with a team of self-advocates and development workers from Sunderland People First. Together, we created the fully co-produced training package that we use now.

The training consists of a three-hour session delivered virtually via Microsoft Teams. It gives an overview of many topics, including what a learning disability is, the health inequalities and barriers people face (and how to overcome them), communicating and making reasonable adjustments, awareness of hate crimes (and 'mate crimes'), and how to involve families in peoples' care.

Each session is very interactive. We mix slides, videos and discussions. Everyone gets involved, reflecting on topics such as 'What makes a good life?', and 'What barriers make it difficult for people to access health services?'

Co-production does not end with developing the content of the training package. It is also an important part of how we deliver the training.

Since May 2023, people with a learning disability from Sunderland People First have become an integral part of the team delivering the training. They help CNTW staff gain a much better understanding of the topic. And, more importantly, they challenge misconceptions, myths, and stigma around learning disability.

The training has received lots of positive feedback from staff. People have described it as informative, insightful, engaging, and moving. One person called it "one of the best training sessions I have undertaken for a while." Another said that "it opened my eyes to things I never considered before." Many people particularly appreciate the sessions which are delivered with people with a learning disability, saying that this is "an education in itself, demonstrating the 'can do' of people who have a learning disability."

People with a learning disability often say how important it is that there should be "nothing about us without us." This has been key to how we are developing and delivering this training.

**Justyna Walecka-Bowery, Learning Disability and Autism Lead Trainer**

# Our commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of our people

Many studies illustrate that strong social connections and relationships closely link to increasing happiness, resilience, and overall wellbeing. As an employer we are committed to improving the health and wellbeing of our people and are continuously reviewing and updating our offer based on the feedback we get from engagement work we carry out across the organisation.



This year, Cumbria Northumberland Tyne and Wear NHS FT was awarded Ambassador Status for the Better Health at Work Award (BHAWA), recognising the ongoing work carried out across the organisation to support and promote staff health and wellbeing. Organisations can be recommended for the Ambassador Status when they achieve 'Maintaining Excellence', the highest level of the award, which the Trust has been awarded since 2017.

Our dedicated Thrive website provides a wealth of information and support for staff on health and wellbeing, career development, staff networks and discounts and rewards that are available 24/7 at a time that is convenient for staff.

Reflecting on the holistic nature of individual wellbeing, the website is split into sections which cover different elements of the Wellbeing Star, all of which aim to support good overall health and wellbeing for our staff.

**With you in mind**, below are some examples of how to incorporate the different elements of the Wellbeing Star into a daily routine:

**Emotional Wellbeing** – Staff can access impartial, confidential advice from qualified counsellors via our Employee Assistance Programme provided by Vivup, who can help staff with many different issues, including anxiety, bereavement, stress, depression, workplace.

Alternatively, the chaplaincy team are available for staff to talk to, in a confidential setting, about whatever staff want to say. The Trust chaplains offer spiritual, emotional and pastoral support for all (and, for those who request it, religious support, too).

**Physical Wellbeing** – We want all our staff to be aware of the importance of good physical health and feel empowered to achieve it within the scope of their ability. Our physical wellbeing initiatives are available via Thrive and cater to differing abilities and disabilities.

Regular exercise can help enhance your mood, beat stress and increase your energy levels. Research by the Mental Health Foundation has shown physical activity has a huge potential to improve our wellbeing, even if it's just a short burst of 10 minutes brisk walking. It doesn't need to be intense to get those endorphins going.



There are signposted walking routes at many of our Trust sites to encourage staff to get active and enjoy the benefits of being outside in nature which can be found on our Thrive website.

**Psychological Wellbeing** – To support staff psychological wellbeing, our Staff Psychological Centre is available for all members of staff who are experiencing mental health difficulties, whether mild, moderate or more complex. The team offer a range of confidential, specialist psychological assessments, formulations and therapies.

**Social Wellbeing** – Taking just a minute out of your day can help ground you in the present and enhance your social wellbeing. To explore the benefits of mindfulness and ways to practice wellbeing techniques, our Meditation Café offers an opportunity for staff to take some time out and have breathing space to relax.

The Trust also have our Menopause Cafes which allow staff to express their views and experiences safely. All staff are welcome, regardless of age or gender.

**Financial Wellbeing** – This year, the Workforce Development Team delivered their first Financial Wellbeing Week for staff, covering a range of common money worries including debt, credit scores, pensions and more.

For staff to watch these sessions, find the financial wellbeing page in the recent news section on the staff intranet or search for 'financial wellbeing week'.

**Career Wellbeing** – CNTW Academy offers a broad range of training and career development opportunities, including apprenticeships and a leadership development programme.

Visit [www.thriveatcntw.co.uk/learning-development-overview/](http://www.thriveatcntw.co.uk/learning-development-overview/) to see some of the ways the Trust can support staff with career development.

Alternatively, staff can sign up for coaching to establish their own career goals and work towards achieving them by contacting Claire Baxter, Trust Coach and Development Manager.

**Hannah Greaves, Health and Wellbeing Lead**

# Our staff networks and support groups

The people who work for us are our greatest asset, and we are committed to creating a more diverse and inclusive organisation. One of the ways we support this is through our staff networks. All our staff are encouraged and have our support to join and attend these meetings.

We currently have three staff networks, linked to characteristics protected under the Equality Act. We also have some staff support groups, which are open to any staff to attend.

## Disabled Staff Network

The Disabled Staff Network has made big strides this year. We partnered with Disability Rights UK and Purple to create bespoke leadership development programmes for disabled staff across CNTW. Purple also ran confidential focus groups for us. These gave us insights into disabled staff's experiences of recruitment, induction, and culture at CNTW. The Disabled Staff Network also hosted training for staff on 'ableism'. This can be an uncomfortable topic, but one that's important to raise awareness of. It affects both our clinical practice and our interactions with other staff. The training was well-attended (including an appearance from CNTW's Chief Executive, James Duncan) and has had a good impact so far. We have also worked alongside other teams to make recruitment practices more inclusive. For example, by increasing the visibility of staff with visible differences in our public materials. We're finishing this year energised and excited to keep working towards positive change for our disabled staff in CNTW!

## LGBTQ+ Staff Network

This year saw CNTW receive a Silver Award from Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index. This was a fantastic achievement for the Trust and the LGBTQ+ Network. The award recognises CNTW as an inclusive employer which will not tolerate discrimination and hate towards staff, and that it continues to strive towards providing an equal workplace. The Trust has risen 193 places in the Workplace Equality Index ranking since joining. This shows how much work the Trust and Network have done to bring LGBTQ+ issues to the forefront. This has included pledges for staff - including Executive Directors - to sign against hate and in support of allyship with trans people. We have worked hard to raise awareness and ensure that LGBTQ+ staff members' voices are heard. We're continuing to build a workplace where people can be their authentic selves without fear of discrimination or harassment.

## Cultural Diversity Staff Network

In March this year, we're proud to share that our team of nineteen Cultural Ambassadors won the Royal College of Nursing's Black History Month Team Award, celebrating their positive impact on equality, diversity, and inclusion at the Trust.

These Ambassadors are extensively trained to ensure any cultural aspects of formal disciplinary cases are raised and challenged appropriately throughout the process. Cultural Ambassadors were appointed in 2020 after the Trust found a disproportionate number of staff from ethnic minorities were entering formal disciplinary processes compared to white staff. Since the Cultural Ambassadors were introduced, this imbalance has significantly improved. We also hosted a four-day event for stakeholders in the Trust to consider barriers to equality, diversity, and inclusion in the recruitment process. And we are pleased to have seen a real increase in staff from ethnic minority backgrounds progressing their career within the organisation.

## Staff Carer Support Group

This new support group was founded this year by two carers working for CNTW. We connected by chance. But after chatting, we decided that other people in a similar position might find a supportive group helpful. There's plenty of us - did you know, one in seven working people are carers? In our new group, we have shared our stories and offered advice, used our professional knowledge to help one another, and considered what keeps us well. We've also supported each other with some practical aspects of flexible working agreements and employment conditions. We can also link up with colleagues to anonymously feedback any themes or issues which arise. We have quickly progressed from a 'chat over a cuppa' among two colleagues to holding well-publicised and well-attended sessions. We're looking forward to driving more improvements for carers at CNTW.

## Mind, Health and Wellbeing Staff Community

Our growing community continues to attract more members. We received some amazing feedback following a wellbeing day in March this year. We also held regular meditations, yoga sessions, monthly prayer meetings. We are also hoping to get some of our other wellbeing events running again now that COVID restrictions have fully lifted. Staff are always welcome to join us, and we can share or signposting to lots of wellbeing resources and support.

## Armed Forces and Veterans Association

Our Armed Forces and Veterans Association continues to thrive; our new name was overwhelmingly supported by our membership (now more than 90 staff!) We have continued to meet on a regular basis and have heard several personal stories from our members about their life experiences in the military, as well as hearing from a variety of external speakers. A highlight of our year having the Right Honourable Johnny Mercer, MP, Minister of State for Veterans Affairs for the United Kingdom, come and join one of our network meetings to share his experiences and answer questions. We have been actively involved with army recruitment fairs, promoting careers within our organisation and supporting applicants - feedback from this has been very positive. Over the coming year we will focus on the next steps for our Association, including developing an armed forces and veterans strategy in collaboration with our clinical colleagues in the Trust's Op Courage Veterans Wellbeing Service.

# Staff Psychological Centre - an accessible and safe space to access support

The staff psychological centre (SPC) was created to prioritise staff wellbeing, with the aim of improving mental resilience and to alleviate psychological distress so that staff can live a healthy and fulfilling life, both inside and outside of work. We want staff to feel heard, to know that we are sensitive to their emotional struggles and that they are supported by us.

We provide an accessible and safe space for staff to talk about the issues that are impacting them. We want to encourage a return to full engagement in life and work, preventing absence from work where appropriate. We provide confidential, specialist psychological assessment, formulation, and interventions for mild, moderate and more complex mental health difficulties where a stand-alone psychological intervention is appropriate.

Therapy at our SPC aims to support staff to gain insight into their difficulties and work to address them by finding solutions and coping strategies. Our therapies help reveal and change negative patterns of thinking and behaviour and can also help break down overwhelming problems into smaller parts. We provide a range of specialist evidence based and trauma-informed psychological interventions from Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Eye-Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), Cognitive Analytic Therapy, Emotion Regulation and integrative approaches including trauma informed formulations to help inform our SPC clients' care, safety planning and treatments.

From August 2022-2033, we have had 202 referrals and 159 of those have been since January.

Our SPC team is made up of passionate clinicians who believe in the potential of every staff member. We believe that the best care outcomes are dependent upon the health and wellbeing of our staff. If staff wellbeing is protected, there will be better staff retention, leading to better patient outcomes and experiences. Our therapies are accessible to all CNTW staff who may be struggling with their mental health. If you are a member of staff, you can find a referral form on the intranet or you can self-refer by emailing [pt4staff@cntw.nhs.uk](mailto:pt4staff@cntw.nhs.uk)

**Hannah Sumiga, Higher Assistant Psychologist**





# How can our new strategy, ‘With you in mind’, help us to save the planet?

Developing our new strategy helped us to imagine a future based on what’s important to all of us. We heard from service users, carers and staff that people want high quality healthcare. We also heard that people are worried about our impact on the environment.

We want healthcare to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem. This felt like such an important principle that we incorporated it into our values:

“We are respectful, because everyone is of equal value, is born with equal rights and is entitled to be treated with dignity. We want to protect the rights of future generations and the planet that sustains us all.”

Sustainable healthcare is about making sure that the way we work now does not cause a problem for future generations. One of our strategic ambitions states that ‘we will work in a way that is kind to the planet’. But what does that actually mean, and how might that change the way we currently work?

The principles of sustainable healthcare have been woven throughout our strategy so that we consider our impact on the planet when we make decisions.

## Some examples include:

- Prevention, self-care and empowerment
- Preventing avoidable ill-health is the most environmentally friendly approach the NHS can take. We want to help people get well and stay well by valuing principles such as early intervention, easy access, involvement, personalised care and peer support.

- Being efficient and using less waste
- Making our care efficient and productive makes our services sustainable. Through our strategy, we have committed to:
  - Services being embedded in communities
  - Working effectively with other parts of the health and care system
  - Delivering evidence-based services by working in ways that are proven to be effective
  - Joining up our services to help people who have needs spanning more than one area, for example mental health issues and addictions or substance misuse
  - Training our staff in topics such as neurodiversity or trauma-informed care
  - Making sure that our staff are well and happy at work because quality of care is affected by workforce satisfaction
- Reducing our carbon footprint

The energy we use produces dangerous greenhouse gases, which contribute to global warming. We have reduced our carbon footprint in recent years but we need to do more. Through the Trust’s Green Plan and our ‘CNTWClimateHealth’ programme, we are looking at how we heat and insulate our buildings and the ways we travel to and from work. We have an annual programme of tree planting to make our sites more pleasant and to absorb carbon from the atmosphere. We also want to be more thoughtful about the things that we buy and use. For examples, reducing single use plastics and food waste, using less paper for printing, and recycling more.

**Anna Foster, Trust Lead for Strategy and Sustainability**





## Introducing our first ever Volunteer Involvement Strategy

**Volunteering is defined as ‘an activity undertaken freely that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or individuals or groups other than (or in addition to) close relatives.’**

This has been a big year for Voluntary Services as we launched our first ever Volunteer Involvement strategy.

Volunteers have played a key role in our organisation for over 30 years and their contribution is invaluable. They encourage others, complement the work of our staff, and help us provide the highest possible levels of care.

At CNTW, we recognise the importance of including volunteers and we value the immense contribution they make.

There may only be three of us in the Voluntary Services department, but we are committed to ensuring we continue to provide meaningful volunteering opportunities that have a genuine impact on our patients, carers and colleagues, as well as helping meet the needs of the wider community.

And the Volunteer Involvement strategy is part of that commitment.

We are passionate about our volunteers, and I hope that shines through in the strategy.

Our volunteers are amazing, dedicated, generous people. The strategy is not just a celebration of them, but it will also help recruit more volunteers to develop even more meaningful roles to support our staff. It is part of our aim to not only be regarded as a great place to work, but a great place to volunteer.

Staff, volunteers and service users were all involved in the creation of the strategy. We had to adapt to different ways of working, as a lot of the work behind the scenes was done during the pandemic. It has been a real team effort.

The strategy was launched at a celebration event, bringing together the people who were involved and have supported the work we do.

The strategy sets out our aspirations and how we will show volunteers they are welcomed and appreciated within our organisation.

Another key aim of the strategy is to provide everyone with a better understanding of the role of a volunteer within CNTW and the value of volunteering. We hope to provide a positive experience for every volunteer who comes into our services.

The strategy aims to raise the profile of volunteering within CNTW, whilst aligning the future development of volunteering to the Trust's 5 Year Plan.

Many of the volunteering opportunities currently available at CNTW involve supporting social activities with patients such as walking and talking, assisting our staff colleagues in providing individual and group therapeutic activities within our inpatient and day services teams, playing board games, watching films, arts and craft sessions, gardening and woodwork, accessing local community groups, and seeking feedback from patients and carers.

Because of the pandemic, the way we work and deliver our services has changed. It has seen a growth in digital technology which is also reflected in the way our volunteers engage. There are still traditional volunteering roles but there are now new opportunities as well.

Our team works to ensure volunteers are recruited into roles, screened, trained and supported safely and effectively. We couldn't do this without the support from our healthcare teams, who are committed to ensuring that all volunteers receive support and thanks for their involvement, recognising the impact they bring to their service.

We know volunteering is a huge help to CNTW, but it also benefits the volunteer too. We have seen many times how volunteering can help people boost their confidence and self-esteem, learn new skills and feel more connected to their local community.

Many volunteers go on to paid employment at CNTW in a variety of different roles after volunteering with us.

We want to champion an organisational culture that welcomes, sustains and celebrates volunteers as an integral part of CNTW.

Myself, and Becca and Joanne in the team, are really excited to put the strategy into practice and see what the future holds for Voluntary Services and our volunteers.

If you'd like a copy of the strategy, please email [volunteer@cntw.nhs.uk](mailto:volunteer@cntw.nhs.uk)

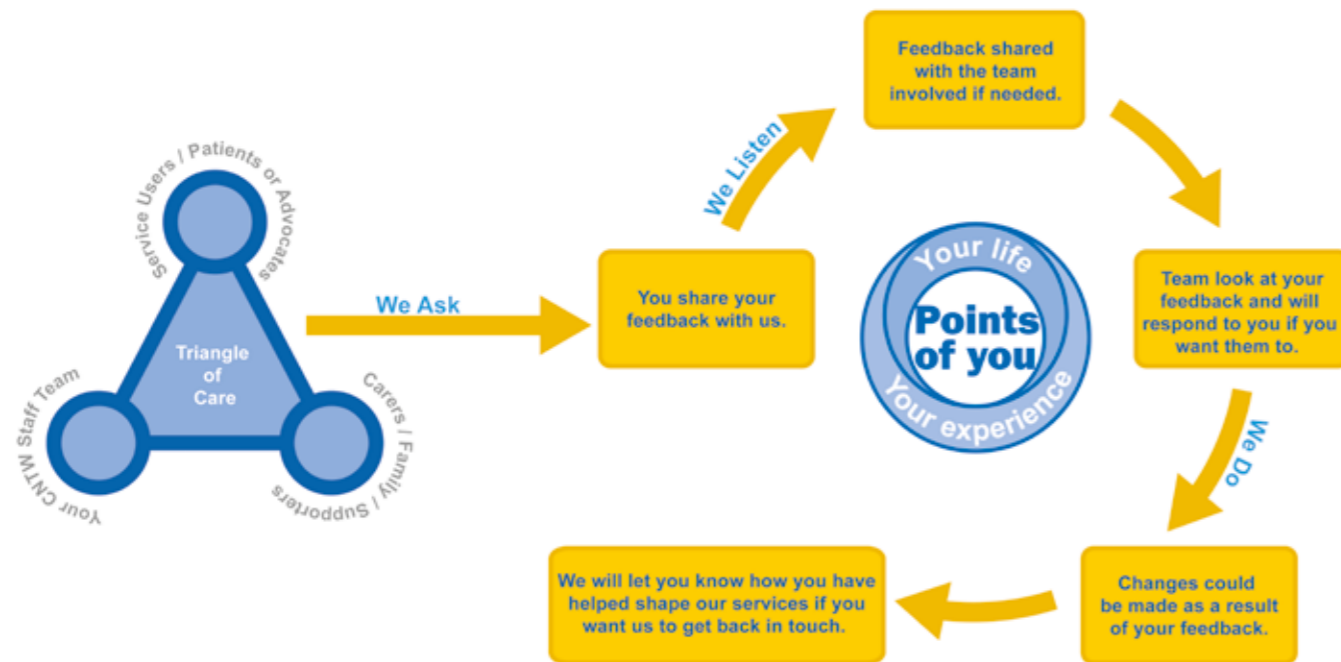
**Wendy Spratt, Head of Volunteer Involvement**

# Being responsive to feedback from service users and carers

Being responsive to the feedback of people accessing our services is something we take very seriously. The Trust has a number of ways people can share their experience of services with us, both directly and indirectly.

The vast majority of our experience feedback comes through our survey Points of You (PoY). This survey is available online, through copies available in waiting areas or on request as well as through letters we send to people after discharge.

Our feedback process is based around the principles of Ask-Listen-Do, set out by NHS England as a way of making it as easy for young people, people and with a learning disability and their families to share their experiences of services as it is for other service users, as illustrated here:



A small team of people are responsible for making sure surveys are where they are needed, as well as for reviewing and theming completed surveys, in an average month these total around 500 on average.

The information from these surveys is useful to all levels of the organisation. Either through reporting at Trust and local level, the experience of service users and carers, highlighting areas for improvement or good practice. As well as at team or ward level, where teams are able to be reactive to the needs of people accessing the service.

Because all surveys are anonymous (no identifiable information), we are able to make all feedback accessible to all staff through a dashboard. This is a live dashboard that allows staff to explore the information to suit their needs.

Showing how the Trust is responsive to feedback is important. This is done in a number of ways. Firstly through reporting on a quarterly basis in leadership meetings at Trust and local levels.



Secondly, each team has access to a digital 'You Said - We Did' poster, shown as an example here.

This poster is populated with some headline figures for each team that are auto populated. These include satisfaction ratings through the Friends and Family Test (FFT) question responses, numbers of completed surveys and the themes of comments received during the month shown.

The 'You Said - We Did' part is developed by the team as a response to the feedback received in the previous month. Allowing teams to show feedback matters and is being responded to in a timely manner.

Posters are produced monthly by each team.

**Paul Sams**  
Feedback and Outcomes Lead

# Key developments in the CEDAR programme

Our CEDAR Programme supports the delivery of new care models and ways of working which are proven to aid recovery and enhance patient experience, in line with national standards and the latest best practice.

## Three major capital developments are the main focus of the programme:

- Sycamore, a new-build, state-of-the-art integrated adult mental health and learning disability secure service 'centre of excellence' at Northgate Park, bringing together all our low and medium secure adult services onto one site
- Moving our provision of Newcastle and Gateshead adult inpatient services from the Tranwell Unit in Gateshead and the Hadrian Clinic at the Campus for Ageing and Vitality in Newcastle), to St Nicholas Hospital
- Moving our provision of Children and Young People's (CYPS) medium secure services from St Nicholas Hospital to Ferndene, including a national provision for female patients

## What is changing at Northgate?



The redevelopment of Northgate Park will provide a total of 118 male inpatient beds, located in a combination of new and reconfigured existing buildings. This will allow all secure services across the Trust to be brought together in a single, integrated secure care centre of excellence.

Patients from the Kenneth Day Unit at Northgate Park and Bamburgh Clinic at St Nicholas Hospital will move into the new Sycamore building. Sycamore will provide integrated services for adult males with a mental disorder who have offended or are at risk of doing so.

Sycamore will comprise of six wards, with 72 beds in total. The wards are arranged around a central space, which offers a stage area, sports barn, a running track and landscaped gardens. Sycamore also offers access to a spiritual space, an education suite, art rooms, shared therapy spaces, a gym, and woodwork facilities.

Inside, each ward has lounge and dining areas, chillout rooms, activity rooms and laundry.

We have worked with artist Dan Savage to create artwork for Sycamore's buildings and outdoor surroundings. Dan hosted a consultation with patients and staff to find out what images came to mind when they thought about the names of the new wards - Alwinton, Berwick, Elsdon, Harthope, Linhope and Rothbury.

There have been a number of opportunities for staff to familiarise themselves with the building and its facilities before it opens.

Staff from across secure care took part in live-ins, including clinical teams, admin staff and NTW Solutions, each carrying out their normal role in the state-of-the-art facility. Northgate's sports team facilitated sessions and teachers ran some classes in the classrooms on site.

Peer supporters represented patients during the live-ins and followed the same rules that patients observe to whilst in secure care, such as not using their mobile phones and the internet.

Where possible, patients had an orientation day and patients' families, friends and carers were invited to an open day where they had the chance to look around the new buildings and ask questions.

We have also worked with Northumbria Police to run through different incidents that could potentially take place and make plans for how we should respond if they occur.

The opening date is estimated for Autumn and we're really excited to welcome our patients.

## What is changing at Ferndene?

The Ferndene part of the CEDAR programme is the reconfiguration of the award-winning children and young people's mental health and learning disability Ferndene Unit at Prudhoe. This will involve the move of the Medium Secure Unit to bring all Children and Young People's inpatient services, with the exception of Lotus Ward in Middlesbrough, together all under one roof. This will provide a dedicated and effective service to meet the needs of these different patient groups.

Our medium secure inpatient assessment and treatment services for young people, currently provided from Alwood at St Nicholas Hospital, will move to refurbished wards at Ferndene (currently known as Stephenson).

The next phase of work will see several reconfigurations to services at Ferndene:

- Redburn flats will become a three-bed low-secure mental health unit
- Redburn will become a general admission mental health unit
- A four-bed Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit will remain at The Riding
- Fraser will become a seven-bed complex learning disability unit, with three low-secure beds and four general admission beds

To allow reconfiguration and structural work on Redburn flats to take place, Redburn will decant into Fraser (and some overflow to Lotus Ward). The plan is for these services to move into their new locations in summer 2024.

## Where hope begins

Two members of staff have recorded a charity single which will be released to raise funds for SHINE. The song, which is called 'Where Hope Begins' was inspired by the end of the Covid pandemic which had a huge impact on the pair and the people they work alongside in the NHS. The musical duo work as cleaners at St Nicholas Hospital and the idea for the song came about in the midst of the pandemic during socially distanced breaktime chats. Peter Prest, who has been working at the hospital for 26 years wrote the lyrics and Paul Hewitson, with almost a decade on the same site, wrote the song itself.

The idea snowballed and before long the song was not only written but had been recorded in Paul's home studio. They then decided it needed a music video and worked with colleagues to appear in the music video. The video features staff holding up cards with their memories of the pandemic and what their experiences were of going through that time.

The song which has recently launched with live performances at the hospital now has CDs for sale and the video is available to [watch online](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mJvDKi54i6g) (www.youtube.com/watch?v=mJvDKi54i6g). People are encouraged to buy the CD or if they watch the video to donate to SHINE via the website.

Find out more about the story of [Hope](https://ntwsolutions.co.uk/hope/) (https://ntwsolutions.co.uk/hope/).



## Better health for all

Our mental wellbeing is hugely important to us all, and it can't be separated from our physical health. Our mind and body are connected and how we feel, both physically and mentally, impacts us all in different ways.

Many more of us are needing a helping hand or a listening ear with our mental health and wellbeing. For many, this will be making resources available or connecting people to community groups, and for others more specialist support and advice.

Set up in July 2022, the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board – or ICB – has set out some demanding goals we want to achieve by 2030.

Through our new Integrated Care Partnership with councils, hospitals, community and voluntary sectors and other organisations, we have launched a far-reaching plan called Better health and wellbeing for all. It sets out ambitious aims to help people to stay healthy by addressing the causes of ill health, preventing diseases, and improving mental health and wellbeing.

Our demanding goals aim to tackle the key causes of early death in our region - such as smoking, alcohol, obesity, heart disease, substance misuse and suicide. These goals include raising healthy life expectancy, reducing suicide rates, and cutting smoking levels from 13 per cent of adults to five per cent, as well as giving children and young people the best start in life.

We have a strong focus on key priorities around learning disabilities, autism, and mental health provision, and in particular the quality of those services. We continue to increase our spending on mental health year on year, both in absolute terms and as a share of our budget.

We know that waiting times for mental health services are longer than we would want them to be, due to both the level of need and a shortage of qualified specialist mental health staff.

We are working hard to improve access for people, to reduce waiting times as well as investing in extra support like social prescribing, and offering psychological support in GP practices in our most deprived communities.

For children, we have invested in new activities and ways to deal with anxiety and low mood, as well as a wider range of talking therapy services and mental health support teams in an increasing number of schools.

We are making real progress in improving services, but services on their own are not enough. Our area faces long-standing disparities and economic challenges that impact the mental health of people. High rates of unemployment, poor quality housing and wider social inequalities contribute significantly to the levels of anxiety, depression, and other mental health problems.

Sadly we do have some of the highest rates of drug-related deaths in England, the second highest rates for heart and liver disease, and some of the highest rates of suicide. Child poverty is double the England average in some areas, while respiratory disease rates are much higher than average.

These issues can only be addressed through a holistic approach, including wider factors like job creation and education, as well as access to high-quality mental health services for people of all ages.

For example, housing is vital to our mental health and wellbeing. A safe, stable, and suitable place to live provides a foundation for good mental and emotional health. Decent housing gives a sense of security and control, reducing the stress and anxiety that come with poor living conditions.

Having meaningful employment and a purpose as well as good social, family and friend networks also makes a huge difference. We often talk about having something to do, someone to love and somewhere to live being so crucial to our overall sense of wellbeing.

As an ICB, we are working with local leaders in many organisations across the North East and North Cumbria to address these issues and the long-standing health inequalities that are so prevalent. Working together in partnership is so vital as it will be this, along with the strength of skills and experience that rests in each of the communities, that hold the solutions.

We also know that people with Severe Mental Illness (SMI) or a learning disability often find it more difficult to access the physical healthcare services they need. This means conditions can go undiagnosed, leading to poorer health outcomes and reduced life expectancy. Our GP practices continue to encourage take-up of regular physical health checks to address this issue.

One of our key aims is to halve the difference in the suicide rate between our region and England as a whole. Working closely with local councils, we are taking steps to make this happen.

These include reducing access to the means for suicides and ensuring that mental health services offer care that is trauma-informed, therapeutic, safe, relational and the least restrictive possible. A clinical audit of suicides will help to inform our approach, along with the involvement of people with lived experience of mental ill health and the experience of bereaved families. We know that targeted support for people at high risk or bereaved by suicide can make a real difference.

We have also developed a population health management approach to reduce the impact of mental health, learning disability and autism in people's lives. This means using data and intelligence to increase our understanding of needs and opportunities, so we can plan services better.

Above all, we want to hear people's views about their experiences, which is why we are setting up 'lived experience' groups for autism, learning disabilities and mental health as well as other ways for people to contribute their thoughts and ideas.

All this work depends on a strong, well-trained workforce for autism, learning disabilities and mental health. Our workforce plans include steps to offer new skills and retain skilled staff, new innovative ways of working, as well as widening awareness of learning disability and autism among our staff. We're also developing children and young people support where we continue to develop the Making Every Contact Count approach.

The needs and challenges we face are real – but we are determined to reach our goals of better mental health and better services to support it.

You can find out more about the work of NHS North East and North Cumbria ICB and opportunities to get involved at [www.northeastnorthcumbria.nhs.uk](http://www.northeastnorthcumbria.nhs.uk)

**Samantha Allen, Chief Executive of North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB)**



# Online accessibility guides to our buildings and sites



As an organisation we are committed to improving services for people. Our strategy has been built around what service users, carers, staff, partners and our communities have asked of us.

We will work tirelessly to improve the mental wellbeing of the people and communities we serve. Part of our commitment to service users is to work in an effective way that considers all their needs.

We understand that there is no 'one size fits all' approach when it comes to meeting people's needs.

That's why we have worked in partnership with AccessAble to develop a series of guides for many of our Trust sites and services. AccessAble produce online accessibility guides to buildings, sites and venues across the UK. We have worked with them to produce detailed access guides which let people know what access is like when a person visits somewhere. It looks at the route people will use to get in and what's available inside. The guide includes facts, figures and photographs of the site, allowing people to check where they are going beforehand.

We know our service users have many different needs, both physical and mental. And we know this can sometimes make coming to new places difficult. We know everyone's accessibility needs are different, and that what's accessible for one person may not be accessible for someone else. That's why having detailed, accurate information of our sites is so important.

All of the information collected by AccessAble has been asked for by disabled people and carers. The guides are updated every year, so we know our services users, carers and visitors can access the most accurate and up-to-date information.

Everyone is entitled to the care and support they need. We need to ensure that our services are as accessible as possible to the most people. This is part of our ongoing work to provide high quality, caring and compassionate mental health and disability services for all.

Accessibility guides for our sites can be found at: [www.accessable.co.uk/cumbria-northumberland-tyne-and-wear-nhs-foundation-trust](http://www.accessable.co.uk/cumbria-northumberland-tyne-and-wear-nhs-foundation-trust)

Or you can click on the AccessAble logo wherever you see it on our website.



## How you can support SHINE

We offer many ways to support the SHINE fund and are hugely grateful for each and every donation we receive.

### Online donation



Donate online via Just Giving, a secure online donation service. You can make a one-off or regular donation using credit/debit card at:



[www.justgiving.com/northumberlandtyneandwearnhs](http://www.justgiving.com/northumberlandtyneandwearnhs)



### Cheque donation

Please use the donation form on our website if you'd like to make a one-off donation by cheque.



### A gift in your will

After providing for their loved ones, many people make a gift to their local hospital in recognition of personal treatment, or that provided to a relative/friend. Help and advice on appropriate wording is available from our Charitable Funds Team on 0191 2467215



### Fundraising

If you would like to fundraise for the SHINE fund, please contact the Charitable Funds team:

**0191 2467215**  
**[charitablefunds@cntw.nhs.uk](mailto:charitablefunds@cntw.nhs.uk)**

# The year in CNTW

There is always so much to be proud of at CNTW, and this year was no exception.

September saw the signing of the Equally Well UK Charter. The Charter is a group of over 70 organisations who are working together to improve the physical health of people with mental illness, with the aim of reducing the life expectancy gap between people living with mental illness and the general population. By signing the pledge, the Trust commits to improving access to physical health support for patients accessing our services.

October saw another pledge signing where our executive team agreed to be part of the solution to stop hate and encourage change. Created by our LGBTQ+ staff network, the pledge sets out that everyone, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, deserves respect and to feel safe and supported.

In November we celebrated our patients' success in the annual Koestler Awards, a national arts competition which celebrates art created by prisoners and secure patients. 25 artworks received an award, including an award for Outstanding Debut. Two paintings received a Platinum Award, the highest award available.

Also in November, our Mental Health and Deafness Service produced two videos with members of the Deaf community to highlight support available in a crisis. Deaf people are around twice as likely to experience mental health issues compared to the general population, making it even more important that information is provided in an accessible format about what support is available if they find themselves in a mental health crisis.

In December the Trust joined the Think Ahead social worker programme. Think Ahead works with both the NHS and Local Authority adult mental health services to strengthen the contribution of social work. The innovative graduate programme aims to widen the pool of talent entering mental health social work. The programme focuses on on-the-job training and teaching provided by Middlesex University.

In the New Year the focus was very much on providing improved access to recruitment with the Trust creating an application support hub designed to support candidates from a diverse range of backgrounds through their recruitment process.

Freely available on the CNTW website, the hub takes applicants through the recruitment process. It includes what to include on the application form and how to present the information, tips on how to prepare for an interview, examples of common interview questions, and suggestions for follow up questions to ask at the end of an interview.

Continuing on the theme of recruitment in February, mental health nurse Monica Dsouza featured as part of an NHS England campaign highlighting the support and opportunities available for internationally recruited nurses to progress in their NHS career. The national campaign promotes resources to help internationally recruited nurses maximise their personal and professional growth in the NHS.

In March the Trust celebrated again when Sunderland University announced the Trust as the winner of the Employer of the Year Award at their Apprenticeship Awards 2023. Apprentices praised the work of the Trust's Academy.

March also saw the publication of the Annual Staff Survey results. The results found 85.9% of staff felt that their role makes a difference to service users and patients. High numbers of staff said that they feel the care of patients and service users is a top priority for the organisation. The survey also highlighted respect, kindness and positive working relationships amongst staff.

At the end of March, builders working on the redevelopment of Monkwearmouth Hospital in Sunderland unearthed a time capsule that was buried in 1930. We have collaborated with Tyne & Wear Archives to make plans for displaying the time capsule's contents.

April saw us support Lesbian Visibility Week and members of our LGBTQ+ Staff Network shared their experiences of coming out as lesbian and what being visible at work means to them.

In May, we were awarded Ambassador Status for the Better Health at Work Award. Organisations can be recommended for Ambassador Status when they achieve 'maintaining excellence', the highest level of the award. The Trust was praised for its efforts to make opportunities equitable and fair for everyone, running engaging campaigns and the new website Thrive.

In June, a group of nine young service users recovering from psychosis spent six days sailing from Peterhead to Hartlepool. The trip was part of The Voyage to Recovery project, which aims to support people recovering from a mental illness by providing an alternative environment for people to learn new skills, grow in confidence and build relationships.

This month we also launched our first ever Volunteer Involvement Strategy. It is part of our aim to not only be regarded as a great place to work, but a great place to volunteer. Volunteers, patients and staff were all involved in creating the strategy which was launched at a celebration event in Gosforth.

July saw us celebrate the 75th birthday of the NHS. To mark the occasion and to raise money for our SHINE charity, we held various competitions including a raffle and baking a birthday cake. It was also an opportunity to thank our staff and volunteers, both past and present, for everything they have done.

There was another cause for celebration in July, with the North East Drive Mobility service winning two national Drive Mobility Awards for their work helping people to keep or regain their independence as drivers and passengers. Paula George, transport hub lead and driving advisor, received the award for Greatest Individual Contribution to Driving Mobility, and the service also won the Outstanding Teamwork Award.

And finally, in August we announced the appointment of our new chair Darren Best. Darren will take up the role in October, taking over from his successor Ken Jarrold CBE.



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