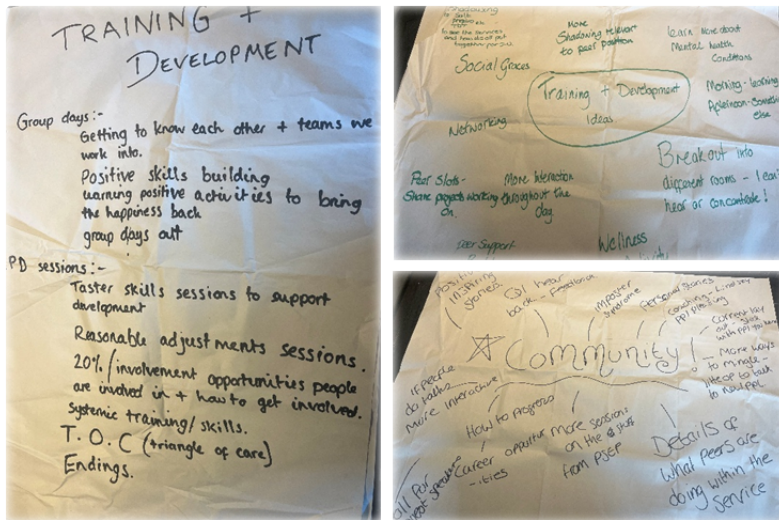


Lived Experience Care Group Development Day

The Lived Experience Service hosted the first Care Group Development Day on 17th July 2025, in the Jubilee Theatre at St Nicholas Hospital. Peers from across the organisation came together to learn, share and connect, which supports their continuous professional development. Adam Wright, from Northumberland and North Tyneside CBU, kindly shared two presentations on Secondary Trauma and how lived experience was utilised within his teams to support service users.



In the afternoon session the Peers participated in group work to identify areas for continuous professional development, their thoughts have been collated and will be used by the new steering group that will set the agendas for the sessions moving forward.

Any Peers that would like to be part of the steering group are welcome to join and should email:

LivedExperience@CNTW.nhs.uk

2025 Peer Support Education Programme

Cohort 5 of the Peer Support Educational Programme (PSEP) is now complete. Thirteen students took part each week, hearing stories of lived experience, and taking away knowledge and reflections that will help them both at work, and personally. The first week saw them establishing what they wanted and needed from the 12 sessions, what they needed from each other, and set the scene for the weeks ahead.



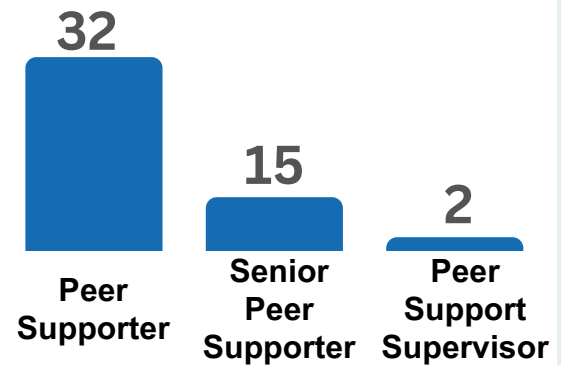
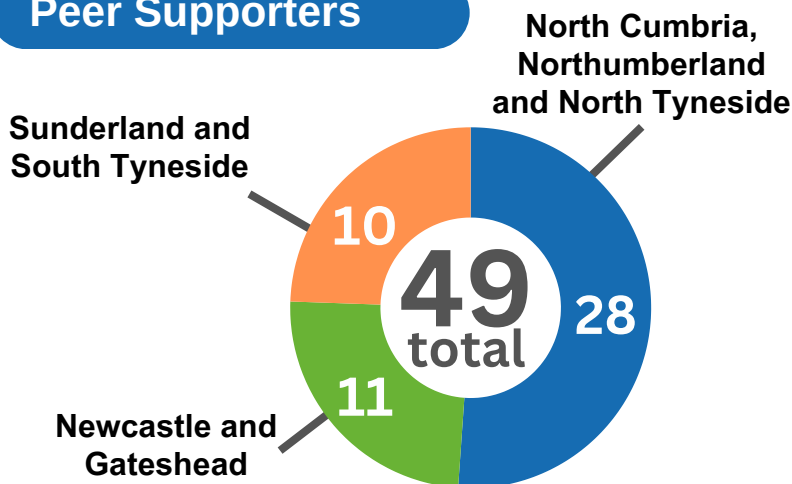
Throughout the programme, Peer Supporters have explored;

- coaching and mentoring conversations.
- discovered more about hearing voices and intrusive thoughts explored worldview, wellbeing and boundaries.
- enjoyed extremely informative and engaging sessions about eating disorders and gender.

The PSEP Celebration Day will take place in October 2025.

Community Services

Peer Supporters



Spotlight Alison Turnbull Feedback

Alison Turnbull has been working in the Community Treatment Team in North Cumbria for four years. During this time she has built solid and impactful relationships with service users, helping them to overcome personal challenges, challenges in the care pathways, and also supporting them to better understand themselves. She consistently receives positive feedback, highlighting the impact that peer support can have for those who have the opportunity to utilise it.

"I had a positive experience from peer support it was a lifeline for me when I needed it the most and I am very grateful for this. Thank you."

"It helped me a great deal with my confidence and to know that I'm not alone dealing with my mental health anymore."

"I have managed to volunteer partly due to Alison's support and I am now employed by them. I will miss Alison so much as her care and professionalism has been exemplary."

Hope Haven Update

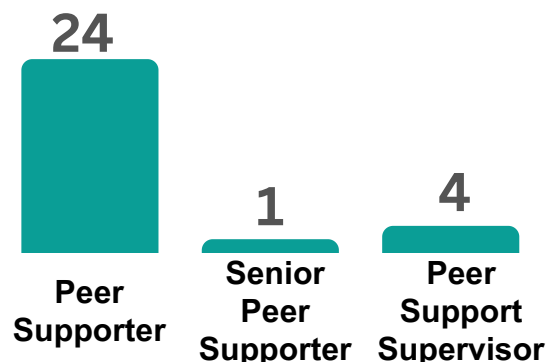
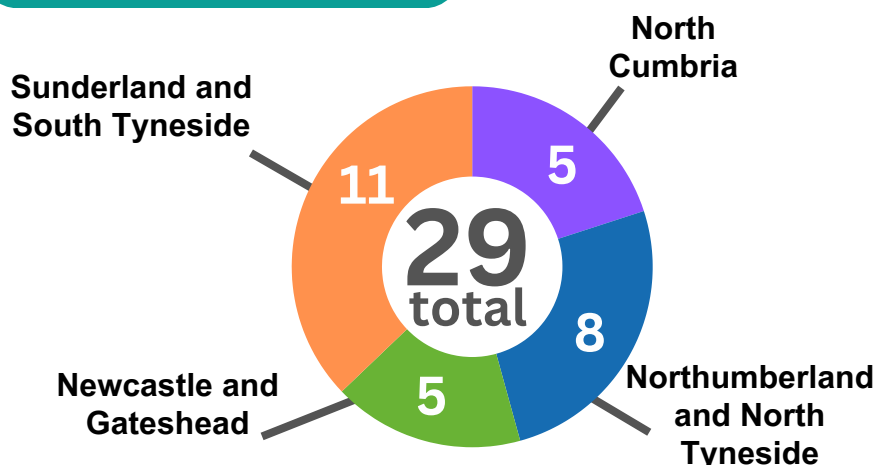
Hope Haven is a radical redesign of how Mental Health Services are made available. The Trust is working in partnership with third sector organisations to meet the needs of the local community.

Peer Supporters, third sector organisations, and other staff from Hope Haven, were invited to an Away Day on 20th June. This was an ideal opportunity to get to know all of the different elements of Hope Haven, and what they offer. Peer Supporters Sara Dempsey and Laura Wilson shared their stories and their aspirations for Hope Haven.

You can follow Hope Haven on Facebook for regular updates on our progress:

www.facebook.com/hopehavencumbria/

Peer Supporters



Spotlight Carers Week 2025

Newton Ward opened its door to carers and families of service users on Friday 6th June. With a buffet lunch made with contributed effort from the patients, it was a huge success. There was karaoke and families danced and sang with staff and carers, along with a game of bingo and iced coffee. Carers chatted with other carers, service users and staff. All the staff on Newton Ward worked as a team to contribute to what will be the first of many carer and family days.

The event provided an opportunity to appreciate each other in a caring environment, and time to chat, laugh, listen, join in and relax. Siblings were able to engage in activities and families were pleased to see what happened behind the ward doors. One Grandparent carer helped to make sure everyone had a bingo ticket and pen, and even jived with Mel Christie, Peer Supporter, while Grandad sang on the karaoke with their loved one.

“This day has been great, it has really made a difference to our family member as we have stepped into his world, he has been excited and proud to let us see what happens on the ward and the amazing team of staff that are helping him, it would be amazing if we could do this again.”

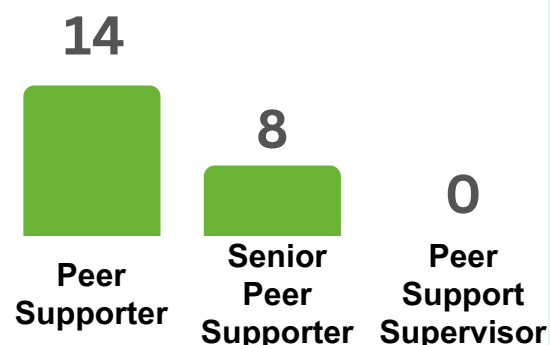
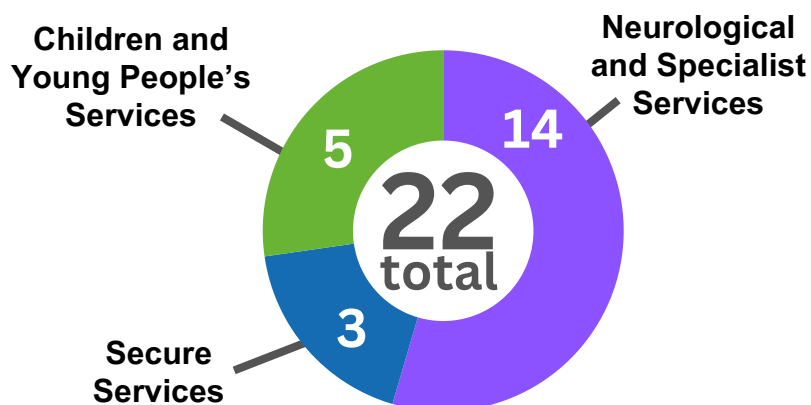
“It was lovely to see a face as I usually speak to you on the phone, thank you for this I feel better in the knowledge of all the support my son has.”

Debra Bassett, a Peer Supporter on Hauxley ward, arranged a two day coffee event. Rather than simply offering refreshments, she invited representatives from Carers Northumberland and the Pharmacy team to attend in order to make the event more engaging and beneficial for carers.

“I organised a stand on both days to promote the support services available to carers. Carers Northumberland provided information about the assistance they offer, while the Pharmacy team was available to provide advice and address any medication-related queries.”

To ensure strong attendance, Debra distributed flyers, placed posters on service users doors, and contacted carers directly by phone. This approach was successful, resulting in an excellent turnout. Additionally, specially prepared carers' packs were distributed to offer further support and resources

Peer Supporters



Spotlight Together - Katie Watson, Family Ambassador

I have been working with a family for a long time now whilst their young person has been an inpatient. The young person's sibling has struggled to visit for many different reasons and the sibling's relationship has become strained and I have come to understand that this is something that the siblings and parents have found difficult.

Using my transferable skills from my time as a hairdresser I was able to facilitate a shared activity. Those who know me know that I am forever changing my hair which is often a topic of conversation and the siblings had been asking (separately) if I could colour and style their hair for them.

Their parents gave consent and risk assessments were conducted and even though it was done on separate days, I arranged to do their hair. During the activity they were able to have conversations with me about their relationships, interests and lives and both siblings were interested in what the other was having done and how the other was.

This opened the door to discussions regarding what they would like to do for our last session together, when the time came. Both siblings agreed that it would be nice to style their hairs together, in the same room and have a joint session together. The following week when I visited the family, the sibling, who was not in hospital was really excited to tell me that they had been communicating with their sibling and wanted me to see all the messages they had been sending to each other.

This may be coincidental, it may not, I would like to think that the shared activity with myself, although done separately, supported the siblings to reconnect. I was genuinely touched to see how happy they were and that they had been able to reconnect.

Lyndsey Tunney has been a Peer Supporter in CNTW for 9 years. Having worked in various peer roles within the Trust she offers a wide variety of experience to patients, carers, and colleagues. Lyndsey Tunney currently works in Secure Care and works closely with the Recovery Council.

The Recovery Council

In Secure Services one of our most valuable meetings is our Recovery Council, chaired and led by patients with help from Peer Supporters. We have patient representatives from all of our inpatient wards, and we discuss topics that are meaningful and important to them. Our representatives take feedback to their staff and peers in their own ward Mutual Help meetings and then bring back any views and questions to the monthly Recovery Council group. We have an agenda, an action log, and minutes are taken and distributed to the wards. We invite staff to our meetings who can help answer our questions and listen to our views. The group is all about lived experience and improving things that really matter. As a Peer Supporter this group is one of the things I'm most proud of being a part of in our service. Hearing the service users voices and working collaboratively with our staff to make positive changes is fundamental to us as Peer Supporters.

Identifying Themes

One of the common themes we identified across all our wards was issues with food. Patients told us the quality was inconsistent, mostly of a poor standard. The portion sizes are too small. Not enough variety and the presentation could be improved. Items were sometimes missing or delivered to the wrong ward. Our first step was to raise these concerns with our catering department who oversee the regen kitchens. We were advised to speak with the ward staff and take photographs with the ward iPad which could then be shared with the right people. This was completed, but we saw no real improvements.

Collaborative Working

We then decided to host a meeting and invite Debs Blackburn (CNTW Catering Supervisor Lead, Northgate) and Elizabeth Archer (Dietitian) to provide service user feedback and help to answer our questions. We now have staff from catering and dietetics included as permanent members of the Recovery Council.

Discussions were undertaken in relation to the catering suppliers in how the menus and portion sizes are decided. We learnt about ordering extra portions, ordering from the alternative menus and what happens with waste. We found this information was useful and interesting. Debs helped with patient requests such as ordering different condiments and additional food storage. Elizabeth organised a visit to the wards at mealtimes to see things for herself. She weighed out food portions, gave information about healthy alternatives and is organising some training about food presentation. We also made sure the pictorial food allergen files were available on all wards and up to date.

It is great to have our catering team and Dietitian involved and things did improve a bit but still some issues with the food continued. Our patients are passionate about their voices being heard especially about such important issues as food. They would not give up easily about making changes! So as a group and with help from Peer Support and staff it was decided we would contact Tony Wealleans, Head of Catering and write a letter to Bill Kay, Group Nurse Director to escalate the issues.

Next Steps

We learned that the Trust was considering different suppliers all frozen ready prepared meals. The Recovery Council members strongly requested that we are involved in this process. Kathleen Guy (Assistant Catering Manager) along with Lottie Haylock (Site Manager) arranged a tasting event for service users where they could sample some potential new food choices. The day was well attended, and the team received lots of comments and ideas such as:

“The 4 week rotating menu becomes repetitive when you have been in hospital for many years”.

“Could we have a summer menu with more things like salad options, cooked meats, wraps, fruity iced drinks, open sandwiches, quiche etc. And a Winter menu with warming stews, curries, roast dinners....possibly some themed food weeks throughout the year”.

“Our Occupational Therapists run breakfast clubs and support patients to make fakeaways which we like. Some patients with leave can enjoy meals out or provide their own food. For those of us who eat regularly from the trolley it would be nice to have something better”.

“Us patients come in all shapes and sizes big and small. Some of us work out a lot in the gym and work with sports therapy staff burning a lot of energy – but our portion sizes are all the same. This feels like a one size fits all approach and should be more individualised and care planned”.

The tasting sessions were enjoyed by everyone. Our comments were taken away and will be used by the procurement and catering team when making decisions about suppliers and food choices moving forward. Our Recovery Council members will continue to review standards. This is only one example of the power and influence of our Recovery Council.

Many services have something similar but if you would like to find out more about how we use our collective voices to influence positive change please contact the Peer Support and Recovery Team at Northgate Secure Services.

Maternal Mental Health Awareness Week

On 7th May, Denise Eland and the team at the North Cumbria Perinatal Mental Health Service, celebrated Maternal Mental Health Awareness Week 2025. This week aims to raise awareness and foster conversations about mental health before, during, and after pregnancy. The theme for this year was "Your voice, your strength", emphasising the importance of women feeling heard and supported in expressing their needs and experiences.

Denise chose to follow the theme of “voice” with a music and singing group for the Mums and babies. The babies were mesmerised by Blue Jam’s musical instruments and the group also got to enjoy a treat of scones, traybakes and juices. The Mums left with new ideas to soothe their babies, and a lifted mood for themselves. One Mum said: I really appreciate the event and having something to look forward to. The baby loved it!”

Trustwide Highlights



ADHD Lived Experience Programme – Launch Update

We're really pleased to share how well the first two cohorts of our ADHD Lived Experience Programme are going and cohort 3 starting in November. The groups have been connecting, learning, and supporting each other across Carlisle and Whitehaven. This programme has been created and is delivered by people with ADHD, for people with ADHD, or those currently waiting for a diagnosis.

The programme runs over six weekly sessions, combining honest conversations, lived experience, education, and practical tools, all in a relaxed and inclusive space. So far, we've covered:

Session 1 – What is ADHD?

Getting to know each other, busting common myths, and exploring what ADHD means to us.

Session 2 – The Brain

Looking at how ADHD affects the brain, and how this shapes our day-to-day experiences.

Session 3 – Understanding Symptoms

Starting to unpack what executive functioning really means and how ADHD symptoms show up in everyday life.

Session 4 – ADHD & Emotional Wellbeing

Exploring and understanding symptoms associated with ADHD and how they can interact with mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression.

Session 5 - Strategies

Exploring a range of tips and strategies.

Session 6 - Celebrating Neurodiversity

Celebrating our differences and how ADHD impacts our lives positively. Reflecting over the last 6 weeks and what impact it has had.

Feedback has been really positive. On average, attendees rated the sessions 4.7 out of 5 stars, with many sharing how much they've gained from being part of the group.

Referrals Now Open – Next Cohorts Starting Soon

We're now taking referrals for upcoming cohorts in Carlisle and Whitehaven:

Cohort 3 starting in November 2025

Cohort 4 starting in January 2026

Referrals are open to all service users in CNTW who meet the referral criteria. Please check the referral form for full details. Everyone accepted will be offered a one-to-one appointment before the programme begins, to make sure it's the right fit and to offer early support.

For info or referrals, email: ADHDprogramme@cntw.nhs.uk

Staff Awards 2025

Our lived experience workforce received 22 nominations from across the organisation and 3 were shortlisted. Here are how they reacted to the news.

Laura Wilson - Lived Experience Lead, West Cumbria

"I was shocked to see my name on the shortlist for an award! After the news settled in, I started to welcome the feelings of gratitude that people out there think I am deserving of an award in the category of Lived Experience. I'm proud to represent all of us, and really enjoyed the night out and a catch up with my fabulous colleagues."

Cat Allen - Peer Supporter, Lived Experience Award

I was utterly overjoyed and I cried happy tears when I received an email to say that I had been nominated for a staff award. I felt very emotional because I still find it unbelievable that my amazing job, which is so positive for me in my mental health recovery, can come from my experiences of being at rock bottom. I am so thankful to the person who nominated me. Working as a peer supporter is the first time in my life I have ever believed in myself. I still pinch myself every day.



Winning the lived experience award was my biggest pinch myself moment yet. I have the highest paid job in the world because of the reward and privilege that I feel from meeting and building relationships with service users on Beckfield. I have met the most inspirational, resilient and extraordinary people. I also am very privileged to work in a team that feels more like family to me. I am in awe of their care, compassion and emotional stamina.

There is no other Trust that does peer support like CNTW, without the lived experience service, peer support would not be the ground-breaking service it is in the NHS. It could so easily be tokenistic. I believe CNTW is unique as a trust in its honesty in saying "we know we are not perfect, and we know service-users and their loved-ones can tell us how to be better."

Angela Glascott - ReCoCo - Won the CEO Award

I'm delighted to have been nominated and I'm grateful to James for the Award. James helped ReCoCo untangle from the NHS about 8 years ago. That independence has seen us increase growth and creativity by becoming a Charity and fully maximising our position as, quite possibly, the best Recovery College in the country. Demonstrating that Peers themselves are best placed to create, deliver, run services that truly understand where people are coming from, as well as the day to day adversity they face.



I've worked for the Trust, and its different manifestations for 22 years and I've never been more certain that peer production and peer delivery will be fundamental to mental health services going forward, and I'm very proud to be part of that revolution.

Positive and Safe 2025

On the 9th July, Inpatient Peer Supporters and lived experience staff from both Tees, Esk & Wear Valley NHS Trust (TEWV) and CNTW were brought together by their Positive & Safe teams for the first reducing restrictive interventions networking event. The aims of the day were to explore the subject of restrictive practice, to think about how lived experience positively impacts reduction of this, and to come up with more ways we can develop further.

Interesting and compassionate conversations were had, as well as a presentation from Bee, Senior Peer Supporter (TEWV) about Culture of Care, and an update on the revised Star Wards now named 'Going for Gold' from Jamie Mackey and Laura Wilson from the Lived Experience Service in CNTW. Our next steps are to pilot Going for Gold.

Positive and Safe Network Conference 2025

The Lived Experience Support Service attended this years Positive and Safe Conference. The Service were asked to share some examples of the impact of Peer Support and encourage the delegates to pledge how they would support the ongoing inclusion of lived experience within their service area. The event was well attended with over 100 delegates from CNTW and TEWV.

Claire Atkin, Senior Peer Supporter from TEWV shared how she had supported service users and removed the need for restrictive intervention. Matt Adams, Senior Peer Supporter from CNTW shared a story from a different perspective to encourage us to think differently about the impact of restrictive practice.

New WRAP Facilitators



Congratulations to everyone that recently completed WRAP Seminar 1, they can now use their training to support Service Users, Carers and Colleagues to maintain their wellbeing.

Lynsey Martin shared "It was a great 2 days. Such a lovely group, who really connected well."

Contact Us

If you would like to join our mailing list to receive these newsletters or to get in touch with any Peer Support related queries, contact us as at:

livedexperience@cntw.nhs.uk