

# Service User and Carer Reference Group Newsletter



October 2025



## Summary of October's Reference Group



The meeting took place on Thursday 9th October. The theme was **With You in Mind**.



James Duncan (Chief Executive) introduced the topic of 'With You in Mind' and set out the five key ambitions from the strategy.



The Trust's Executive Team spent time looking at each of the five key ambitions. There was an opportunity for group work and for people to share their thoughts and ideas on each ambition.



Patients and staff from Secure Care shared some of the work the Recovery Council have been doing. This included feedback on food that is served on the wards, as well as a video about making positive changes in Secure Care.



There was an update about the Mental Health and Deafness Project. The group were told of the suggestions and changes that have come out of the project, such as better partnership working, and more awareness for staff training.



There were updates about Clozapine clinics (a medication for treating psychosis and schizophrenia) and how the changes are linked to the Trust's key ambition of 'Person led care when and where it is needed'.

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## More information from the day...

### With You in Mind Strategy Update

The theme for October's Service User and Carer Reference was 'With You in Mind', providing an update and opportunity for discussion about the Trust's 'With You in Mind' strategy.



James Duncan (Chief Executive), opened the session, providing a brief overview of the strategy, and the importance of the Service User and Carer Reference Group as well as wider service user and carer involvement in bringing the strategy to life.

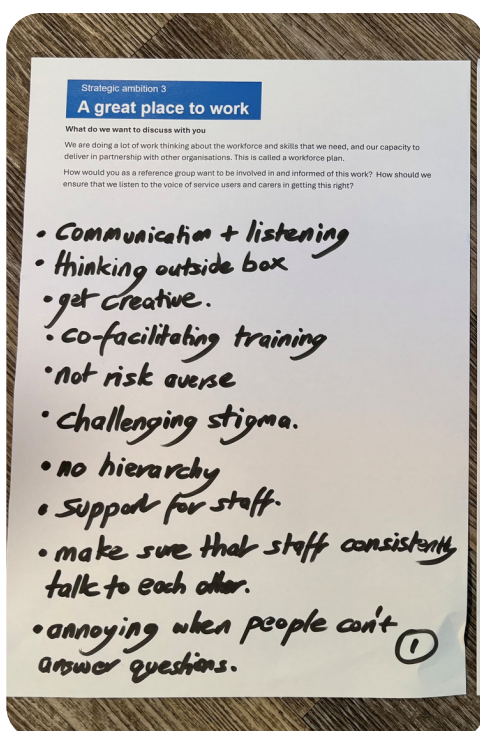
James introduced the five key ambitions from the strategy which also provided the outline for topics for discussion during the morning session.

### With You in Mind - Group Discussion

Throughout the morning, Executive Directors from the Trust provided further context for each of the five key ambitions. Further information was shared on what has already been achieved in relation to the ambitions, as well as the areas where development is still needed.

Attendees, working in small groups, had the opportunity to share their thoughts and suggestions about how we can improve services and ensure that people's voices are heard.

Feedback from the day, as well as the group activities, was collected and sent to the Trust's leadership team, ensuring all voices are heard. This will help shape how the With You in Mind strategy is put into practice, and we look forward to seeing future developments as a result of this work.



## Crisis Services, Favourite Values, & Event Motivation: Five Minutes with James Duncan, Chief Executive



Hello! My name is Aimee Wilson and I'm one of the brand-new Lived Experience Reporters, co-producing articles for the Service User and Carer Reference Group Newsletter! I'm incredibly honoured to be the first Reporter to have attended a Reference Group event earlier this month, and cannot wait to share with you all my five-minute conversation with James Duncan, the Trust's Chief Executive. Read on to hear about his thoughts on improving CNTW's Crisis Services, why he has a favourite value from the With You In Mind Strategy, and all his reasons for attending the Reference Group events...

### Which of the Strategy ambitions is your favourite and why?

That's a really really difficult question! I think that ambition two: the changes that we need to make to services – everything wraps around that and everything that we do, needs to be to make sure that this happens. I guess, it's one of the largest things that will help to make a difference in people's lives.



### In relation to that favourite ambition of yours – what do you think has been the service that people have voiced needs to change most?

Support in a crisis. Two things for that, are that for the best part, people who find themselves in a crisis are people we already know, so I think the key there is how do we improve the care they are already being offered in order to avoid that crisis.

We need to be able to respond more quickly if we can see a crisis is coming. Sometimes the response in terms of timeliness, isn't what it should be.

The second thing is that our response to a crisis needs to be compassionate and respectful, and sometimes teams are overloaded and that means people's experiences aren't what they want in terms of compassion. At the heart of everything, is what we can do to work with people to avoid crisis. I think we can do a lot better than we do now.

### Why did you want to come to the Reference Group event today? What do you think you can gain by attending it?

The first thing is: it's just a brilliant place to be! It's a great Group to meet with and to talk to, it's a really powerful room with all of the experience everyone has. It provides different insight and a real opportunity to say, 'this is what we're doing' and to really guide us on some of the things where we're unsure of how to approach it or where we just want a good conversation about them. It's also the opportunity for people to hear about something and say, "I want to get more involved in that." The idea is really to start the conversation and get some initial ideas, and I'm sure we'll get loads of great stuff from the tables!

## Involving service users and carers in driving change and making improvements within Secure Care

Service users and carers from Secure Services, joined by Lyndsey Tunney (Senior Peer Supporter) and Dr Rajesh Nadkarni (Deputy Chief Executive) also attended the morning session to share some of the work undertaken in Secure Care by the Recovery Council, involving patients in improving services.

**“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.”**

Lyndsey Tunney - Senior Peer Supporter

Information was shared with the group about a key piece of work undertaken by the Recovery Council, where in their meetings, issues had been raised with food served on the wards. As a result, the Recovery Council met with staff from NTW Solutions as well as a Dietitian, to explore new ideas and potential solutions, such as more variety in the food, changes to portion sizes, as well better presentation of the food.

The work undertaken by the Recovery Council is now being included in the process for selecting the food supplier for inpatient wards, with the Council also being involved in tasting sessions.

The Secure Care Team also shared how Secure Services continue to drive forward change by continually involving service users and carers. A video was shown, which has been co-produced by patients in Secure Services, setting out a five-pillar plan for driving forward positive change across Secure Care Services;

### Five Key Pillars of Our Strategy



- 1. Involvement and co-creation at every level**
- 2. Equality, diversity, and inclusion**
- 3. Communication**
- 4. Working together as equal partners**
- 5. Valuing Experience and input**

Discussion time was given to the group regarding the five pillars, and if this could be replicated across other care groups too, sharing thoughts and suggestions about ‘how we can take this learning and apply it across all services’.



## Updates from previous Service User and Carer Reference Groups

### Mental Health and Deafness Project

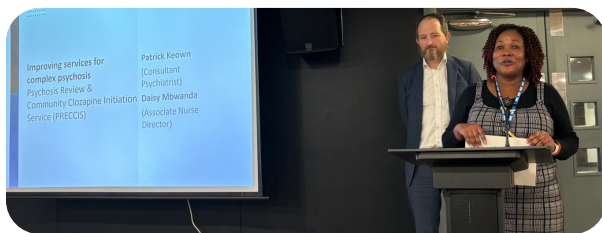


Andy Fox (Involvement Facilitator) and Emily Erceylan (Specialist Speech & Language Therapist) provided the group with an update on the Mental Health and Deafness Project. The project was co-designed to explore the mental health experiences of Deaf people and to raise awareness within the Trust to recommend ways to improve mental health outcomes for Deaf people across the region.

As part of the project, an engagement event was held in May 2025 with Cumbria Deaf Association, the Mental Health and Deafness Service, and the Lived Experience Service. Following this, a report was produced, highlighting key findings and recommendations. Following the report and its recommendations, a lot has already been achieved;

- Mapping of all voluntary and community groups to improve partnership working
- Workshops arranged with Crisis teams for deaf advocates to share their experiences
- Promotion of Deaf Awareness Training as well as Mental Health and Deafness online sessions for staff
- Highlighting the need for accessible information that is available to everyone

### Psychosis Review & Community Clozapine Initiation Service



Patrick Keown (Consultant Psychiatrist) and Daisy Mbwanda (Associate Nurse Director) attended the group to provide an update on the work that has been carried out establishing a Psychosis Review and Community Clozapine Initiation Service (PRECCIS).

Clozapine is a medication for treating psychosis and schizophrenia, with initiation requiring careful assessment, and close monitoring for 2-3 months on average. Most patients prefer community-based titration to hospital admission.

Work is being conducted (linked to the Trust's key ambition of 'Person led care when and where it is needed') to reduce the amount of hospital titrations, seeking to do more in a community setting. To aid this, a 3 day a week clinic will be set up in the Newcastle and Gateshead area from early 2026. This will later become a 5 day clinic, with increased support to provide a Trustwide service.

Service user and carer involvement has been instrumental throughout, and this is set to continue with ongoing representation in the project group, as well as additional input and support from groups such as the Service User and Carer Reference Group.



## Service User and Carer Reference Group: Get Involved!



Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust (CNTW) wants to make sure that the people we serve are at the heart of everything we do.



Service users and carers need to be involved in the design and delivery of services and be able to say what is working well and what is not working. The Trust's Together Strategy is a plan for how we all work to support the involvement and inclusion of everyone.



The Reference Group provides a way for service users, carers and wider communities to meet the Trust's senior leadership team to share lived experience and have a stronger voice.



## Next Service User and Carer Reference Group

The next Service User and Carer Reference Group will take place on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> December. The theme for the morning will be the Triangle of Care, followed by updates from previous topics discussed at the reference group, and a Question Time session.

To book your place at the next Service User Reference Group, follow the link below:

[ReferenceGroupDecember2025.eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/reference-group-december-2025-tickets-755555555555)



Scan the QR code to join the Service User and Carer Reference Group mailing list, or email:

[ReferenceGroup@cntw.nhs.uk](mailto:ReferenceGroup@cntw.nhs.uk)