

Service User and Carer Reference Group Newsletter



February 2026



Summary of December's Reference Group



The meeting took place on Thursday 11th December. The theme was Triangle of Care.



Lisa Strong (Deputy Director of Nursing) spoke about strengthening communication with families and carers. Lisa highlighted the need to involve carers in decision making.



Mary Patel from the Carers Trust talked about the Triangle of Care and how organisations like CNTW complete this yearly self-assessment process.



Joe Desborough (Involvement Facilitator) and Fatema Rahman (Involvement Bank Contributor) shared the impact of the Triangle of Care and what it looks like in practice.



An update was shared on the future of the Service User and Carer Reference Group. The Reference Group is changing into smaller Lived Experience Reference Group's for each of the Care Groups. More information on these will be shared at the next Service User and Carer Reference Group.

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More information from the day...

Changes to the Service User and Carer Reference Group

The Service User and Carer Reference Group (SUCRG) meets six times per year with approximately 200 people in attendance. The group meets face to face, with membership consisting of service users, carers, staff, and third sector organisations, providing an opportunity for service users and carers in the North-East and North Cumbria to use their own lived experience to influence change within the Trust.

The continual success of the SUCRG is something to celebrate, however this success also brings with it a number of challenges. Finding a suitable venue for the group has become increasingly challenging, and ensuring every voice is heard within such a sizeable group brings additional considerations.

To address these challenges, and after careful consideration, the SUCRG is to be restructured into the 'Lived Experience Network' (LEN). Each Care Group; Inpatients, Community, and Specialist, will have it's own Reference Group. The LEN will enable smaller groups of people to come together to influence change, ensuring everyone is meaningfully involved and that every voice is heard. By focussing the LEN on Care Group issues, each Reference Group will be able to explore in greater depth the issues that are of importance to them and, together, explore how we can make CNTW the best it can be.

2025

Service User and Carer Reference Group

2026

Inpatients Reference Group

Community Reference Group

Specialist Reference Group's

The last Service User and Carer Reference Group collectively will take place on 26th March 2026. We look forward to revisiting some of the achievements the Reference Group has supported over the years. We welcome peoples thoughts on the restructure of the Service User and Carer Reference Group into smaller the Lived Experience Networks, to ensure your voices are heard and acted upon.

Strengthening Communications with Families and Carers

Lisa Strong, Deputy Director of Nursing, shared with the audience the Quality Priority, 'to strengthen communication with families and carers ensuring they are actively involved in care decisions and when a patient deteriorates'. Lisa shared that 81% of carer feedback is positive, however there are still concerns regarding communication. This was followed with group discussion, focussing on two key questions;

What are your thoughts of this quality priority? What can CNTW do to ensure carers voices are heard and acted upon?

When someone is deteriorating in the community, what can CNTW do in response to families and carers who raise concerns? What does good look like?

Triangle of Care and The Carers Trust



Mary Patel from the Carers Trust shared the work that is being done nationally around Triangle of Care (launched in 2010). Each organisation that has signed up to the Triangle of Care carry out self-assessments each year against the 6 key standards and submit an annual report.

Mary confirmed that CNTW is the only Trust that publicly publish their annual Triangle of Care report which demonstrates transparency. CNTW's most recent report (as well as four years previous) can be viewed by visiting www.cntw.nhs.uk/livedexperience.

Other highlights from CNTW's most recent annual report included, co-designed and co-delivered mandatory Carer Awareness Training, the expansion of carer roles, the Youth Involvement Bank, the Carer Promise, and the Carer Card.

The Triangle of Care in Practice

Joe Desborough, Involvement Facilitator, together with Fatema Rahman, Involvement Bank Contributor, shared the impact of the Triangle of Care in practice. Joe informed the group about the Trust's Carers Together Advisory Group, who were responsible for co-creating the Carer Promise and the resources for carers. Joe also shared that a Triangle of Care dashboard is currently being piloted for services to complete the assessment online rather than in a paper format.



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 last Reference Group will take place at St James Park, Newcastle on Thursday 26th March, starting at 10am. This event will celebrate all the amazing work that the Reference Group have helped to influence over the last 10 years and update on progress regarding the new governance structure.

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

<https://ReferenceGroupMarch26.eventbrite.com>



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

ReferenceGroup@cntw.nhs.uk