

Lived Experience Service Spotlight

Q4: January - March 2026

Charlotte Williams Wins Regional Young Mental Health Champion Award

The Lived Experience Service are delighted to share that Charlotte Williams, a valued member of the CNTW Involvement Bank, has been awarded Young Mental Health Champion at the Sunderland Young Achievers Awards. This prestigious accolade recognises young people who have made an outstanding contribution to mental health awareness, advocacy, and service improvement across the North East. At just 19 years old, Charlotte has become an influential voice for young people. Her journey reflects remarkable resilience, clarity of thought, and a deep commitment to improving experiences for others.

Having spent much of her teenage years receiving inpatient care within our Trust, Charlotte has transformed her lived experience into a powerful catalyst for change. Her insight and feedback were instrumental in the closure of the seclusion suite at Lotus Hospital, helping to shape safer, more therapeutic environments for children and young people. She also contributes to a multi-agency working group reviewing the discharge process back into the community, ensuring it better meets the needs of those transitioning from inpatient care.

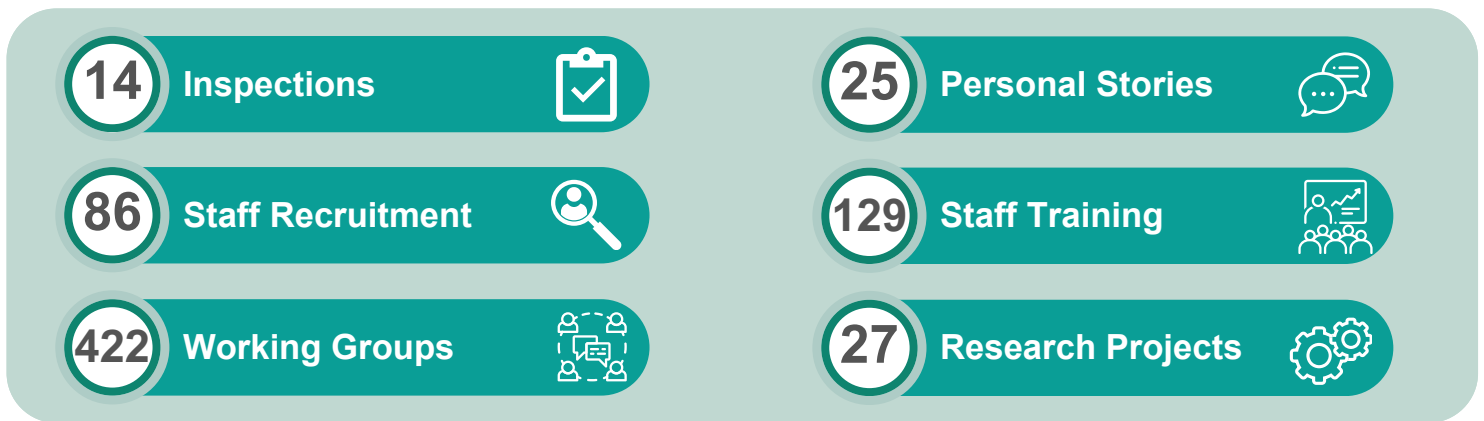
Alongside this, Charlotte is a dedicated member of the Children's Provider Collaborative Lived Experience Advisory Group, where she amplifies the voices of young people and ensures lived experience is central to decision-making. She is also co-producing staff training to increase awareness of what it is like to be an autistic young person on an inpatient ward, supporting more compassionate, inclusive practice across services.



Charlotte's progress over the past year has been extraordinary. She has grown into a confident, insightful advocate whose compassion, honesty, and ability to challenge respectfully inspire everyone she works with.

We are immensely proud of her achievement. Congratulations, Charlotte — an outstanding and inspiring Regional Young Mental Health Champion.

April 2025 - March 2026





The Together Strategy Strategic Ambition: Service Design and Delivery

Oxevision - Opt-in consent model

As of April 2026 the Trust is moving to an 'opt in' consent model for Oxevision. The system will be off by default. Consent will be needed before it can be switched on.

Prior to April 2026

- Opt-out consent model
- Oxevision on by default
- Patients could request to opt-out, but only with agreement from Multi Disciplinary Team

From April 2026

- Opt-in consent model
- Oxevision is off by default
- Patients are asked whether they agree to the Oxevision system being turned on

The Trust currently has standard and easy read information leaflets prepared to explain the system. However, these do not include service user views and experience.

People require information in order to make informed decisions. The guide for consent conversations needs to include user views.

The Lived Experience Service were asked:

- To support in gathering current patient views about Oxevision.
- To gather patient views and experiences of Oxevision through ward conversations
- Ask what current patients would say to someone about Oxevision
- Create statements which reflect the balance of views expressed, and include in consent conversation guidance

Feedback was obtained in Mutual Help/Community meetings with staff known to patients, with appropriate opportunities for one-on-one discussions as needed. 97 Patients views were collated based on five questions:

- 1.How did you feel about Oxevision when you first arrived on the ward?
- 2.How do you feel about Oxevision now?
- 3.What would you tell someone new to the ward about Oxevision?
- 4.Was the information you were given about Oxevision helpful?
- 5.Are there any other thoughts or comments you'd like to share?

Findings have been summarised and reported to the Clinical sub-group and Steering Group for consideration. This includes thinking about how to clearly explain the 'opt-in' approach, including when and where conversation should be introduced. Feedback is also been gathered from carers. We hope to share an update on how this work is progressing in a future report.



The Together Strategy Strategic Ambition: Training

Wellness Recovery Action Plan - A Contributor's Perspective

Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) is a structured, evidence-based approach to mental health recovery developed by people with lived experience. It is built on five key recovery concepts—hope, personal responsibility, education, self-advocacy, and support—and helps individuals create a personalised Wellness Plan that identifies what keeps them well, what worsens their mental health, and what to do in a crisis.

I first came to WRAP at a time when I was extremely unwell and struggling to see a way forward. Although sceptical about what it could offer me, I attended with an open mind—and despite my reservations, I found it genuinely helpful. WRAP gave me the tools to understand what I need to stay well and empowered me to build a plan based on my own life, strengths, and needs.

Creating my WRAP helped me identify unhelpful behaviours and take personal responsibility for making positive changes. It gave me the confidence to advocate for myself in situations and relationships that were not supporting my recovery. One of my biggest concerns had been the idea of sharing personal experiences with people I did not know. But WRAP provides a safe, confidential, voluntary space, and instead of feeling self-conscious, I felt understood by peers who were also open about their own struggles. I realised I was not alone. The Co-facilitators were honest about how WRAP had helped them, which strengthened the safe and supportive atmosphere.

WRAP became a major turning point in my recovery. When I reached a healthier place, I was invited to train as a Co-facilitator. Being asked—especially as someone who is not a CNTW employee—to contribute purely from lived experience was incredibly meaningful. Co-facilitating has restored my confidence and given me a renewed sense of purpose. For a long time, I doubted whether I could ever do anything worthwhile again. Having people recognise the value in my experiences, and believe I could use them to help others, has meant more than I can express. I am so grateful to my Co-facilitators, peers, and the Involvement Bank team for their support.

I would encourage anyone to try WRAP. No matter your background, your experience, or where you are in your recovery journey,

(written by an Involvement Bank Contributor)





The Together Strategy Strategic Ambition:

What's working well and why?

Young People Leading Change on Lotus Ward

The Youth Involvement Bank has played a central role in an important development on Lotus Ward, where the seclusion suite permanently closed on 2 March 2026. This marks a significant step in CNTW's commitment to reducing restrictive practices and creating safer, more therapeutic environments for young people.

Project Lead Beth Carruthers worked closely with the Lived Experience Service to ensure that the voice of a young person with direct experience of seclusion informed this work from the beginning. Throughout the project, a Youth Bank contributor bravely shared her lived experience, offering honest reflections on how seclusion had affected her emotional wellbeing, sense of safety, and overall recovery. She also provided practical suggestions on what approaches would have supported her more effectively during moments of crisis.

A number of key themes emerged from her involvement, including:

- The importance of trusted, familiar staff being present during periods of high distress.
- A strong preference for less restrictive alternatives, such as sensory spaces and personalised de-escalation approaches.
- The value of expanding access to peer support workers with lived experience.

Beth highlighted the significance of this contribution, saying:

“Her insight genuinely shifted our thinking. Hearing directly from someone who has lived through it helped shape a safer, more compassionate approach to supporting young people in crisis.”

For the young person involved, taking part in the project was meaningful and empowering. The contributor reflected on the experience, saying:

“I feel valued, and it means a lot to know my experience will help future young people get the right support.”

This project shows the transformational impact of lived experience on service improvement. The Youth Involvement Bank is proud to have supported this work and remains committed to ensuring young people continue to shape care across CNTW.



The Together Strategy Strategic Ambition: Leadership

Reflections from the Restraint Reduction Network Conference

Voices driving change: Two contributors from our Involvement Bank recently attended the Restraint Reduction Network (RRN) Annual Conference in Liverpool, alongside Jo Brackley, Associate Psychological Services Director at CNTW. The theme this year was: **“The Art of the Possible: Paving the Way Towards a Restraint-Free Future.”**

The event brought together professionals, advocates, and people with lived experience to share ideas and best practices for reducing restrictive interventions. Our contributors played an active role, engaging in discussions and representing lived experience perspectives in mental health services.

“To make progress, you have to be constructive and get past the anger of the pain that could have been avoided. We can’t hold on to that moment—we have to accept that mistakes were made and stand strong to be part of that change.”

Involvement Contributor

“I’m so proud! She pushed herself, but not too hard, and did brilliantly. She is very passionate about change which gives her that drive. She was really proud of herself too. She was so independent and went into the conference only supported by Jo. This progress is incredible.

I can’t believe how far she has come in a year!!! Thank you to you, and the amazing support from the whole team. It takes a village to raise a child!!! You have all supported her amazingly. Recovery is real ❤️”

Parent of Involvement Contributor

The impact of the workshop was clear from the feedback shared by attendees:

- “This is really inspiring – you have set a very high bar for me and my team.”
- “Amazing presentation, we have been focusing on co-production in our services, and the difference it has made is truly inspiring. We have people now getting up and coming to talk, who spend days refusing to come out of their rooms. So excited to see what comes next!”
- “Just a huge thank you from me! A fab presentation, so inspiring!”

This moment reflects the power of co-production and lived experience in shaping mental health services. It shows that recovery is real, and that meaningful involvement can drive real change.



The Together Strategy Strategic Ambition: Communication

Your Voice Poster Co-Design Project – Ferndene Wards

The Your Voice poster co-design project on the Ferndene wards demonstrates a strong commitment to authentic co-production, meaningful involvement, and listening to young people within Children and Young People's Mental Health Services.

Young people receiving care on the Ferndene wards worked as equal partners alongside the education team, Youth Involvement Bank Facilitator, Feedback and Outcomes Lead, and ward staff to co-produce posters promoting the Your Voice feedback QR code. The project was shaped by young people's lived experience and directly addressed the barriers they identified to giving feedback, including low confidence, unclear messaging, and limited understanding of the purpose and value of feedback.

Through structured co-production sessions, young people had real influence and decision-making power over the language, layout, imagery, and tone of the posters. This ensured the final designs were youth-friendly, inclusive, reassuring, and reflective of what young people said would help them feel safe and confident to share their views.

Alongside the design work, dedicated sessions supported two-way dialogue between young people and staff, focusing on why feedback is collected, how it is used, and how young people's voices influence care and service improvement. This approach strengthened trust, transparency, and shared understanding.



During the project, Ferndene wards recorded their highest ever monthly feedback return, with a 125% increase in completed feedback submissions in February. The increase in feedback demonstrates the impact of authentic co-production rather than surface-level engagement. Feedback was constructive, highlighting positive experiences alongside areas of concern, which were explored and addressed appropriately to support ongoing improvement.

For the young people involved, the project increased confidence, strengthened communication skills, and supported them to feel heard, valued, and able to influence their care. Due to its success, this co-production approach will be rolled out across all children's wards and community services.

Impact summary

- 125% increase in feedback submissions during the project
- Highest monthly feedback return recorded on Ferndene wards
- Improved understanding of the purpose and value of feedback
- Rollout planned across all children's wards and community services



The Together Strategy Strategic Ambition:

Recruitment and Selection

Peer Support Recruitment Event



Beadnell Mother and Baby units based at St Georges Park in Morpeth, recently held a Recruitment event supported by Lived Experience Leads, alongside the Ward team, and Lived Experience colleagues. The process began with an open day, where anyone interested in the role had the opportunity to come and meet the team and ask any questions about the role. Successful candidates were invited to a selection day and participated in values based group exercises, where they shared their journeys and reflections on their own experiences with mental health and NHS Services.

The day was a great success, with a suitable candidate identified. Helen, the Ward Manager, shared that it was a well-structured day, providing her and her colleagues with more opportunity to engage with candidates than a standalone interview. This approach allowed for a more rounded understanding of individuals and supported identifying the right person for the right post.

Anyone interested in recruiting a Peer Supporter should reach out to:

Livedexperience@cntw.nhs.uk



Get Involved



If you are interested in joining the Involvement Bank, please complete an expression of interest form by visiting:

www.cntw.nhs.uk/involvement

Alternatively, scan the QR code to complete an online form.



Staff members wishing to make an involvement request can visit the Involvement Service section of the intranet, or alternatively email Involvement@cntw.nhs.uk to request an involvement request template.



LivedExperience@cntw.nhs.uk