

Involvement Annual Report

1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024



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Foreword



Welcome to our Involvement Annual Report. I am delighted to share this report with you which details how we have worked in partnership with service user, carers, communities and staff to develop and improve services.

Much has been achieved throughout the year. The advice we have received from the Engagement Advisory Board continues to help us to engage in a better way. Members have supported us to think about how we provide quality services and to prepare for the introduction of Encompass in the Northern Trust in November. Patient experience has been a key element of the regular reviews of our new model for acute maternity services. The feedback has been extremely valuable in helping us to refine processes, and inform planned developments and service improvements. The Trust Chair and I have had the pleasure of talking to a number of family carers to improve the support they receive and we are committed to continuing this conversation.

Health and social care faces many challenges and we must fully engage service users, carers and the public in improving services. I believe this is a shared responsibility and we must do all we can to make sure the public are fully engaged to achieve the change and improvements that we all deserve.

This report includes a variety of examples showing how service users and carers have been involved but I know that much more needs to be done to draw on the expertise of the people who use our services and the communities we serve.

A huge thank you to everyone who has worked with us over the year, your support has been invaluable.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Jennifer Welsh".

Jennifer Welsh
Chief Executive

Foreword



I believe that people using services can play an important role in shaping or leading the design of the services they use. Through good service user, carer and community engagement, services can be improved to better suit people's needs and improve the experience of those using them.

Working in partnership with people and communities brings many benefits. It means better decisions about service changes and it improves safety, experience and performance. It helps address health inequalities by understanding what communities need and developing services with them. It is about shaping a sustainable future for health and social care.

We all use health and social care services and we all have something to contribute. I believe the voices of people and communities should be at the centre of decision-making at every level of health and social care.

I have seen many examples of how service users and carers have worked at both a local and regional level to drive change and improvement, and hold services to account.

The Northern Trust has a history of strong personal and public involvement with many established networks but we need to further develop the methods used to engage and make sure they are both flexible and robust, with patient experience at the centre. This is critical if we are to create health and social care services that work for everyone.

Thelma Dillon
Trust Service User Representative

Background

Effective involvement is a priority outlined in the Department of Health's (DOH) Health and Wellbeing 2026 – Delivering Together Strategy. Personal and Public Involvement (PPI) has been a statutory requirement since 2009 and has been further enhanced by the DOH Co-Production Guidelines which were published on 2018.

PPI is the term used to describe the concept of involving people and local communities in the planning, commissioning, delivery and evaluation of health and social care services.

Patient and Client Experience (PCE) standards have been in place since 2009. Overall the outcome of PCE is to ensure the voices of the service user and carers, and their experience, results in change and improvement. Understanding patient experience is a key step in moving toward patient-centred care.

Our [Integrated Involvement Plan](#) sets out our vision, commitment and integrated approach to PCE, PPI and Co-production activities. Within Northern Trust, this includes Patient Experience Standards, Real Time Feedback and 10,000 More Voices, Personal and Public Involvement and Co-Production.

The creation of a central Involvement Team supports a consistent, coordinated approach to involvement.

Governance and Assurance



Governance and Assurance



Suzanne Pullins

Executive Director of Nursing and User Experience chairs the Trust's Engagement, Experience, Equality and Employment Group (Quad EG), providing assurance to Trust Board that we are abiding to our statutory duty to fully engage our service users and carers.



Neil Martin

Divisional Director of Strategic Planning, Performance and ICT is the lead Director for PPI ensuring that PPI is a priority within all aspects of our business and planning agenda including transformation projects.



Anne O'Reilly

Northern Trust Chair, has been identified as the Non-Executive PPI Lead and plays a key role in embedding PPI into the culture and practice of Trust Board and the organisation.



Alison Irwin

Head of Equality and Trust lead for service user and carer involvement including patient client experience, personal and public involvement and co-production.

Involvement Team

One of the main resources for enhancing service user involvement across the organisation is the **Involvement Team**, who provide support, advice and guidance to staff, along with training and support for service users, carers and the public as required. This ensures the effective implementation of the Trust's Involvement Plan. Our Integrated Plan sets out our vision, commitment and integrated approach to PCE, PPI and Co-production activities within Northern Trust.



Veronica Meenan
Involvement Manager



Lynda Elliott
Service User Involvement
Co-Ordinator



Sarah Arthur
Patient Client Experience
Facilitator



Jan Taylor
Involvement Admin
Support Officer

Governance and Assurance

We have a range of governance, management and reporting mechanisms in place to support our involvement work. Our Engagement, Experience, Equality and Employment Group (Quad EG), chaired by the Director of Operations seeks assurance that the Trust is compliant with its statutory requirements. Membership includes all divisional directors, non-executive directors, Patient Client Council and a service user representative. The Quad EG is part of the first line of assurance within the Trust's Integrated Governance and Assurance Framework. The Quad EG reports directly to the Trust's Assurance and Improvement Group, then through to Trust Board. Quad EG meets quarterly and is provided with an update on involvement work across the Trust.

Trust Divisional Directors are responsible for ensuring appropriate service user involvement within the work of their Divisions. Trust Board has responsibility for ensuring that the organisation is compliant with PPI Legislation and PCE standards. The Non-Executive Directors ensure the Board acts in the best interests of service users, carers and the public and hold the Board to account by challenging its decisions and outcomes and ensuring due process is followed.

The Engagement Advisory Board ensures the Trust approaches engagement in a way that meets the needs and interests of all communities. Members of the Engagement Advisory Board include service users and carers, selected following an expressions of interest, to represent the communities we serve. Each member has demonstrated links with local communities and supports the Trust to engage in a meaningful way. Members have been involved in the development of the Trust Corporate Plan, Quality Strategy and Vision for Causeway.



Monitoring



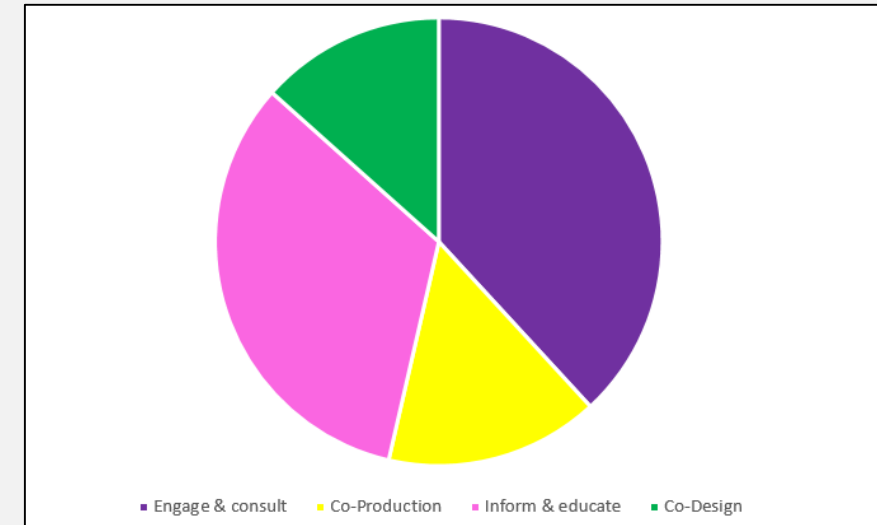
Monitoring

This year we have seen an increase in involvement activities. In our monitoring submissions to the Public Health Agency (PHA) in September 2023 we recorded 72 PPI projects and 82 in our April 2024 submission. This is an increase of 72% from the previous year.

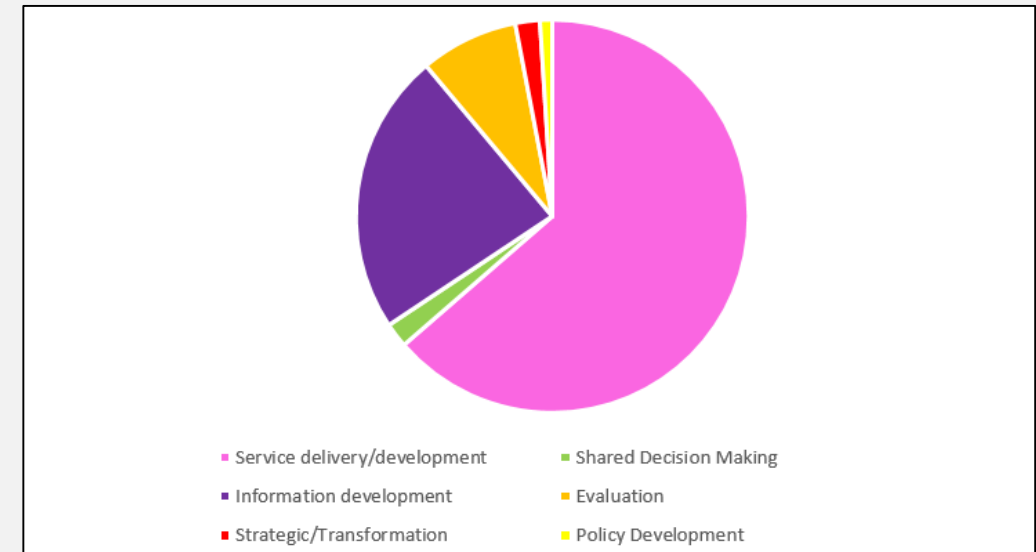
This monitoring data gives assurance that we are meeting our statutory obligation to involve service users and carers.

We have been involved in a task and finish group with the PHA to pilot an Involvement Monitoring, Recognition, Learning and Assurance Process. We identified 5 projects to attend a human library style event with the PHA to talk more about their project. The process has been developed to capture learning and celebrates involvement and the positive contributions it makes.

Level of involvement



Area of involvement



Monitoring

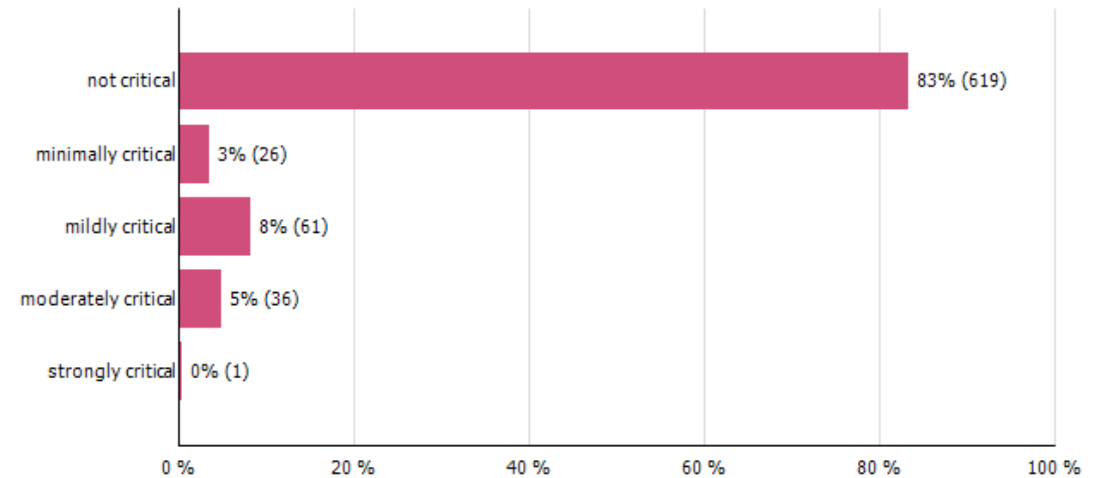
Over the past year Care Opinion has published 743 stories of experience of healthcare shared by patients, service users, their families and carers.

The Trust's commitment to Care Opinion is monitored by the PHA with the submission of an accountability framework report every three months.

These reports highlight the criticality of the stories, response timeframes, themes of what is good and what can be improved, as well as any planned changes resulting from stories.



How moderators have rated the criticality of these stories



Compliments received 2023-2024



Patient Client Experience



Care Opinion

Care Opinion was launched in Northern Ireland in August 2020 providing a platform where service users, families and carers can share their experiences of health and social care services. The Involvement Team continues to embed Care Opinion into Trust culture as the online, real-time, service user feedback platform. This 2 way feedback mechanism promotes the opportunity for open, honest conversations and is the foundation to build and develop trusting relationships between the service user and provider.

The Involvement Team provides support, advice and guidance to staff, working in collaboration with all services, across all divisions within the Trust. The service user 'lived experience' is recognised and valued as driver to encourage and inspire staff to identify, develop and participate in quality improvement initiatives at local ward/department level and at wider Trust level.

In 2023/2024 the PHA regional focus was with service users with a learning disability, their families and carers. They wanted to reach out to population groups who feel seldom heard. In collaboration with NIPEC they looked into how best promote Care Opinion with people who have a Learning Disability due to low numbers of stories. As a result promotional material was designed in collaboration with a group of service users, families & carers. All members of the Regional PCE Group received the opportunity to train in Talking Mats to monopolise on the functions of Care Opinion where stories can be shared using picture tiles. This priority has been rolled over to 24/25 to progress story generation.

Over the past year we have appreciated the opportunity to connect with service users, families and carers with promotional stands at the following events:

- Carers Rights Day, showcase event in Coleraine
- Learning Disability Pride
- Balmoral Show
- Learning Disability Carers Forum
- Monthly in Antrim Hospital, Causeway Hospital and Ballymena Health and Care Centre.



Care Opinion Positive Stories

'We received first class and very efficient and professional treatment'

'I went to get bloods taken today and was greeted by a welcoming face a nurse called Louise who was very pleasant and chatty and made me feel at ease.'

'I just want to express my heartfelt gratitude to the doctors, nurses and staff at the emergency department in Coleraine for the exceptional care they recently provided to my husband. Despite the busyness of the dept., all staff worked together to ensure my husband received the best possible care. It was evident that each person treated him (and from my observation the other patients) with respect and showed utmost compassion. I truly felt like he was the only patient there, and that level of care is truly commendable. I am so grateful to have the Causeway ED in my area. Thank you for everything you do, you are all amazing!'

'The ward was busy yet the staff went about their duties without appearing to be rushed or under pressure - though clearly at times they were both! Everyone not only acted professionally but took time to listen and be interactive. I cannot praise these staff highly enough. They were excellent - even when dealing with patients who were uncooperative and sometimes downright rude.'

'The team all spoke to me really well... I felt safe, well informed and at ease... I wish to say huge thank you to you all for the wonderful roles that you do'

Less Positive Stories

Less positive stories provide opportunities to learn and improve, to make change/ to have an impact on the service reflecting 'what matters' to the people that matter.



Story: 'Patient experienced episode of incontinence at handover time – no nurse answered call bell to take her to toilet.'

Improvement: Response from Ward Manager - 'We have implemented some changes to our practice. At handover time, the second health care assistant on day duty remains out on the ward, to answer any call bells, in a more timely manner and also to be visible to assist where required.'

Story: 'Patient experienced delay in ED 'We sat 2 hrs.... when I went to ask the nurse why mum still had no ECG we were told her folder was in wrong place.'

Improvement: Response from Service Lead – ‘Placement of notes within the ED has been an issue which was raised at our senior management meetings, and in November we sourced a further two notes trolleys to help ensure that patients’ notes remain in their designated areas and patient confidentiality is maintained.’

Story: An expectant mother moved from Braid Valley to Antrim Outpatients Diabetic Clinic posted a story reflecting mixed feelings regarding her experience. One of the issues which impacted on her experience related to the long wait time to see the Consultant in a busy environment, where she felt rushed and overwhelmed.

Improvement: Response from Service Lead, ‘This can be a very busy clinic. It has always been held in Antrim and ladies with a diagnosis of diabetes in the Causeway locality have always been transferred to Antrim for their antenatal care. We have reviewed these clinics and implemented some changes including virtual clinics to aim to reduce the numbers attending.’

Our Chief Executive Jennifer Welsh has endorsed Care Opinion through the video below and has asked staff to encourage feedback from our service users, their families and carers and to value their 'lived experience.'



<https://vimeo.com/829443216/dca0b5ec83>

Follow the above link to view the video

Feedback Boards



Wards and departments celebrated patient client experience feedback by displaying stories received about their department on patient feedback boards so that everyone can share in the experience.



Star Responder

In November 2023 Care Opinion held its Autumn Conference – Caring for Care. The conference celebrated the introduction of the Star Responder Award. We were delighted to celebrate three of our staff receiving this award, Blaithnid Hughes, Diane Boyle and Elizabeth Whyte.



“Hi, My name is Lana, I’m an Assistant Falls Practitioner with the Northern Trust.

I joined the Falls Prevention Team in 2022 and our aim is to provide support to people who are over the age of 65 in the community who have had a fall or have a fear of falling. Through my time with the Falls Team, I have received some lovely feedback from some of our service users via Care Opinion. It is a great privilege to be able to assist people in need and it’s heart-warming for them to then take the time to share their experience on Care Opinion.

This new role has been challenging as it is unlike anything I had done before so receiving this feedback has helped develop my confidence and gives me a great sense of pride for who we are and what we do.”

10,000 More Voices is one of the key initiatives within the Regional PCE programme. It provides an opportunity for deeper exploration of Service User experience of Health and Social Care through bespoke surveys.

Update on Regional Projects that are ongoing:

Experience of Social Work Services

A workshop was held in May 2023 to share the survey findings alongside an action plan to improve experience of service user, families and carers when engaging with Social Work services. A further workshop is planned for August 2024.



Shared Decision Making

This campaign aims to explore the experience of service users being involved in shared decision making during their healthcare journey. This project is in the pilot phase, with pilots being carried out in the Southern H&SC Trust and the South Eastern H&SC Trust. The Northern H&SC Trust will also participate in a pilot survey but the timeframe is not yet confirmed.

Experience of NIAS

10,000 More Voices campaign continues within the NIAS, the plan is to triangulate this learning with other sources of experience such as complaints, incidents and Care Opinion. The PHA plan to produce a report for this in 2023/2024.

Multidisciplinary Teams

This campaign explores the experience of service users attending the Primary Care Multidisciplinary services. Data collection has now closed with a return total 721 (correct 14th March 2024). The PHA will share report findings with services for learning and development in 2024/2025.

My Life in a Care Home

Service Users will be invited to share their story as a resident of a Care Home on what it is like to live within a Care Home and the ways that their health and wellbeing needs supported.

Service User Feedback

The Trust encourages complaints, enquiries, comments/suggestions and compliments and views them as a positive opportunity for learning and improving services. The total number of formal complaints received this year was 854 (including 102 follow on complaints). Services across the Trust receive many compliments; these can range from written letters and thank you cards, verbal feedback and donations to our Charitable Trust Funds in recognition of the service provided. This year the Chief Executive received a total of 5827 compliments.

Feedback from our service users, carers and members of the public/visitors using our services or facilities helps us to identify areas where high quality care is being provided, and where this is not the case we will make changes to improve service quality and safety.

Feedback can be given directly to the service involved either verbally or in writing or by sending your feedback directly to the Chief Executive. **Complaints, enquiries, comments/suggestions and compliments can be sent in writing, by email telephone or calling in person to Complaints/Service User Experience Office**, Northern Health and Social Care Trust, Bush House, 45 Bush Road, Antrim, Co Antrim, BT41 2QB , Tel: (028) 9442 4655 Email: user.feedback@northerntrust.hscni.net



Opportunities and Support for Involvement



Opportunities and Support for Involvement

Involvement Network



Service User Panels

Over the years the Trust has established and supported a number of service user panels in partnership with service users, carers and the community and voluntary sector. These partnerships ensure an effective network for on-going stakeholder involvement and coproduction in our work. Our Carer Pathway Steering Group and Disability Consultation Panel are both user led, chaired by a carer and service user.

The Involvement Network is made up of over 300 service users, carers and representative organisations who work in partnership with the Trust to develop health and social care services. The Network is a key resource to help shape and design services, and contribute to the development of service information. Members have received 90 involvement opportunities and 423 members have taken part in more than 42 engagement events. Over the last year our service users and carers have helped to shape and develop number of service improvements. We continue to advertise membership of our Involvement Network through our website and regularly on social media. In addition the Involvement Team regularly attend events to promote the Network.

The Involvement Team regularly raise awareness about Care Opinion and Personal and Public Involvement with staff and service users. Involvement offers our community the opportunity to share their experience, opinions and what matters most.



If you would like more information or to become a member of our Involvement Network, please contact InvolvingYou@northerntrust.hscni.net or phone (028) 2766 1453.



Support for Involvement

Get Digital



Tweet, message, post and comment; there are loads of ways you can connect with us. We continue to use our Facebook page and Twitter account to circulate any opportunities for involvement to over 35,000 people. We use YouTube as a platform to provide service users, carers and the public with a variety of information including informative videos and audio interviews.

You can follow us on Facebook and Twitter as follows:

 Northern Health and Social Care Trust
 @NHSCTrust



Support and Resources

The Trust is committed to providing training to make sure staff have the skills and expertise to involve service users and carers effectively. Our Involvement Team provides support, advice and guidance to staff, along with training and support for service users and carers as required. We have a range of resources available to raise awareness of involvement on our staffnet site and our website. This includes information for service users and carers on how to share their experiences and get involved. Our Involvement Team Leaflet promotes the support we provide.

Engage is a regional website, which provides those with an interest in involvement, including health and social care staff, service users, carers and the public with information, opportunities and resources in PPI, Co-Production and Partnership Working.



Knowledge and Skills



Knowledge and Skills

Responder Training

Each story on Care Opinion is shared with the appropriate staff to listen, reflect and learn. Each story then receives a response from a trained responder.

Responder training provides staff with the knowledge and skill to provide a timely, meaningful response. In 2023/2024, 62 members of staff completed responder training. All responses to feedback, whether positive or less positive, should be personal, empathetic and understanding. Dialogue between the service user and provider helps to build confidence and trustful relationships with the recognition that patient experience is a valued contributor to service improvement and change.

Awareness Training

Care Opinion Awareness Training and Framing the Ask training is shared with the broad spectrum of staff across the Trust

The aim of the training is to raise awareness, knowledge and understanding of Care Opinion and provide staff with the confidence to ask for feedback and to value the learning received through the lived experience. 619 members of staff completed this training.

Facilitation Training

To ensure our staff have the skills to facilitate and plan service user involvement we held a session of our specialist facilitation training. 19 members of staff completed this training. The session was designed to create a safe and interactive space, to provide guidance on facilitation tools and meeting designs that would work best in different situations. The session also looked at the use of technology to support facilitating discussions as we are still in a hybrid working situation with in person and online events.



Knowledge and Skills



Appreciative Inquiry Training

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a unique engagement approach for stakeholder conversations. AI believes that positive change comes from harnessing the gifts and assets people, organisations and communities already have building on what's strong, not what's wrong.

We held a workshop to support staff to understand how to use Appreciative Inquiry (AI) concepts and tools as a model of engagement for real discussion and exploring change/improvement.

20 staff were trained on the practical facilitation techniques and tools of AI.

Involvement Training

The Trust is committed to providing training to make sure staff have the skills and expertise to involve service users and carers effectively. From April 2023 – March 2024 a total of 799 staff have taken part in our involvement training programme. We continue to raise awareness and promote involvement at every opportunity.

Citizen Space

Citizen Space is an online tool which we use to design questionnaires and surveys. It continues to be very popular as a method of engagement and feedback. 313 accounts have now been set up and staff have received the relevant training and support. Citizen Space was designed in collaboration with government, specifically for public sector use.

Engage

We continue to work in partnership with staff, service users and carers in the ongoing development of Engage to ensure there is a wide range of tools available to effectively involve service users and carers.

Engage is accessible by everyone to find out about involvement opportunities and training. Check out Engage at <http://engage.hscni.net>



What has been happening across the Trust

The following pages highlight some of the
involvement projects carried out over the last
year



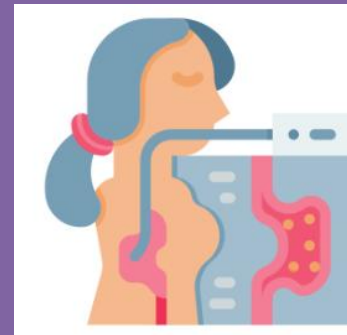
Endoscopy Unit



The Northern HSC Trust Linked Endoscopy Units take part in the Global Rating Scale (GRS) which is designed to obtain accreditation for the endoscopy service. GRS is set by the Joint Advisory Group (JAG). Accreditation gained from JAG will show that the service demonstrates a high level quality of care which means that service users can feel confident in the service when attending for their endoscopy procedure.

A section from the GRS framework asks us to engage with our service users regarding:

- Pre procedure information and access to the Units
- Staff professionalism
- Communication
- Privacy and dignity
- Post procedure information and results.



We carry out an annual online to gauge and update the information we give verbally and in our patient information leaflets / appointment letters. They help us to measure our current practice against a defined standard, furthermore allowing our service to build meaningful user/provider relationships, by establishing effective and constructive communication.

Learning Disability Service User Forum

The NHSCT Learning Disability Service User Forum has played a vital role this year in shaping services. Through bi-monthly meetings the members have provided valuable insights on key consultations such as the 'Make my Space a Happy Place' review, the review of the Learning Disability Nursing Easy-Read policy as well as giving feedback regarding 'The Community Hub Initiative'. Their lived experience ensures that policies, training and services are developed with their needs and perspectives at the forefront.

This not only improves decision making but empowers the service users to take part in the development of their own services. The following graphic summarises the work completed by the forum in 2023.



Therapeutic Team for Looked After and Adopted Children

The Therapeutic Team for Looked After and Adopted Children (TT-LAAC) is a Trust wide, multi-disciplinary service composed of: Psychology, Social Work, Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Administration. TT-LAAC provides assessment, consultation, intervention and therapeutic support to care experienced Children, their Carers/ Parents and Staff across the whole Trust.

TT-LAAC is a limited and stretched resource and we were very aware of our waiting list and a gap in the training needs of our Foster Carers, Kinship Carers and Adoptive Parents. The pandemic also negatively impacting on TT-LAAC's ability to fully function as a service. As such, in 2020 an audit was completed to specifically identify the training needs of our Carers within the NHSCT. Results of the audit highlighted that Caregiver's wished to have more training on 'Specific trauma-informed interventions' and 'Theory/ practice overviews'. Therefore TT-LAAC began to plan to re-implement the Foundations for Attachment (FFA) Group Work programme. FFA was developed by the renowned, Dr Kim Golding (2017) and is informed by the Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP) model developed by Dr Dan Hughes (2009, 2011).

FFA is a 6 session programme for caregivers caring for children whose capacity to emotionally connect has been compromised as a result of attachment difficulties, trauma, and loss or separation. Our service decided that post sessional programme, compassionate reflective sessions would be offered to each group to further our partnership working with professionals and service users and promote continued, safe reflective spaces. FFA is an evidence based and innovative group resource that also helps to reduce TT-LAAC waiting list by reaching more service users per group and ultimately, increase placement stability, a core objective of TT-LAAC. An additional aim of the FFA group was promotion of partnership working which has been achieved through group co-facilitation with colleagues external to TT-LAAC.

Since September 2023, 2 groups have been completed with 57 caregivers being invited to attend, equating to 34 families. Of those invited, 19 caregivers (15 families) attended the groups. A new group is currently being organised of which 35 caregivers (25 families) will be invited to attend. TT-LAAC aim to continue to roll out this training on a cyclical basis.



The Causeway IBD Patient Panel

The Causeway IBD Patient Panel is a collective of service users who have Inflammatory Bowel Disease (Ulcerative Colitis or Crohn's Disease) and are under the care of the gastroenterology team in Causeway Hospital. The panel meetings are facilitated by the IBD Nurse Specialists. Meetings are held quarterly and the group also host awareness events.

The aims of the Patient Panel are:

- To gather service user feedback and identify gaps in service/areas for improvement. They have highlighted a gap in the service for a clinical psychologist.
- To create a forum for peer support as due to the sensitive nature of symptoms, patients often feel uncomfortable to discuss.
- To help raise awareness and understanding of the condition, symptoms and management.

This year the Patient Panel held a very successful open night to raise awareness of medical and surgical treatment options for the disease.

Guest Speakers included Dr Manikpure, Consultant Gastroenterologist and Miss McCoubrey, Consultant General and Colorectal Surgeon. CCUK, the National Charity, and NHSCT Stoma Care Nurses also attended.



The IBD Buddy Scheme



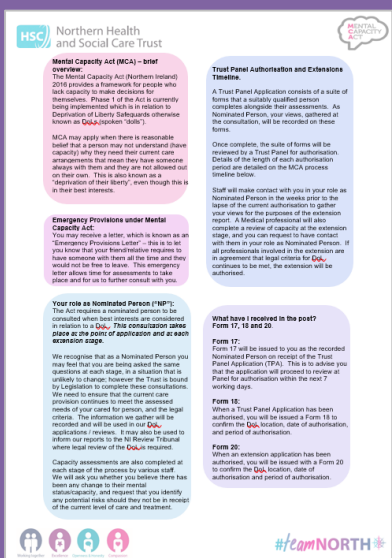
The Panel also launched their new Peer Support Telephone Service "The IBD Buddy Scheme" in May on World IBD Day.

They held an information day in Causeway Hospital with information on the disease, and a fun interactive quiz with cupcake prizes.



The Mental Capacity Act

The Mental Capacity Act Service has engaged in a quality improvement project aimed at enhancing the knowledge and understanding of carers who are involved in the Mental Capacity Act (MCA) in their role as Nominated Persons. Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLs) under MCA was implemented in 2019, and therefore remains a relatively new piece of legislation that requires significant engagement between Trusts and those identified as Nominated Persons.



We identified that there had been a deficit in the promotion of MCA amongst the general public at its inception, which had resulted in high levels of carer stress in regards to the process and the possible involvement of Legal bodies such as the Office of the Attorney General and the Review Tribunal for Northern Ireland. In an attempt to minimise this stress, the MCA service devised and circulated a Nominated Person questionnaire to identify areas for which further information would be of use.

We received good response rates, and from the feedback received, designed an information eaflet to assist Nominated Persons in navigating their way through the DoL process. As a result of the project, staff feedback would indicate that Nominated persons demonstrate a clearer understanding of the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards under the MCA, the formal processes relating to DoLs authorisation, and their role in the overall process.

Self-Referral to Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy

As of 22nd April 2024, service users can refer themselves to the NHSCT Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Service by completing an online or paper referral form. Self-referral allows people to access the service without seeing a GP or other healthcare professional first. This helps people to take the lead in making decisions about their own care, provides a direct link to the service, and will help to reduce the demand on GP appointments. The service user forum provided invaluable feedback which guided the development of the self-referral forms to ensure that the format and language used was clear and user friendly.



The Carer Hub



In early 2023, a carer suggested that the Trust hold a conference for unpaid family carers, as in the years prior to the pandemic, it was beneficial for carers from across the Trust to all come together. The Carer Hub listened to this request and hosted a conference to recognise and celebrate unpaid family carers as part of marking Carers Rights Day.

The Carer Celebration Conference, held on 30 November was attended by over 200 unpaid family carers from across the Trust area, alongside Trust staff and organisations that support carers. The event was carer led with carers participating in the main event with a specially formed carer choir and a showcase of carers creative writing from the previously launched book Carers Collective Creations.



On Carers Rights Day, Young Carers supported by Barnardo's Young Carers Service attended Trust Board to follow-up on a meeting with the Carer Hub earlier in the year on Young Carer Action Day. The Young Carers had the opportunity to share their stories with senior staff in the Trust and the young carers each gave an inspiring insight into their lives.

Meeting the Trust Chair and Chief Executive

The Trust Chair and Chief Executive committed to meeting with unpaid family carers, including young carers twice a year through a carer listening event. The first listening event was held on 27 March with 24 carers.

Carers suggested using a questionnaire to capture the main themes of caring. The key themes are; communication, navigating health and social care (transition points), carer advocacy, carers own health needs, identification/recognition, information and support through the Carer Hub. The first listening event was a very constructive and informative engagement, reflecting honest sharing of carers views and exploring the lived reality of caring.



Working Together to Communicate Better

From 2016 AHPs have been working with service users and staff to support communication through the AHP journey. This started in paediatrics with the development of a communication ‘toolkit’. The toolkit set out key principles to be used, to support the therapy-family/ service user interaction, at every AHP contact.

This is now being reviewed and adapted to all AHP services in the NHSCT. Service users have been involved throughout in focus groups, interviews and in workstreams to co-produce the original communication toolkit. Adapting this has also involved service users in 1:1 interviews. This information will form the basis of evolving the original communication toolkit, whilst also engaging with staff around their needs.



The group of service users will be further involved to produce and review the evolved product which will form the foundation for communication across all AHP services.

The Brain Injury Service



Brain Injury Service has continued to strengthen its’ link with Ulster University in 2023/24. Seven service users were involved in the reaccreditation of the Physiotherapy and Speech and Language Therapy courses.

Their input influenced changes in course content and led to the development of “conversation cafes” with students. Three conversation cafes were held online in March 2024.

Ten service users educated Physiotherapy and Speech and Language Therapy students on the impact of fatigue, cognitive deficits and role changes after brain injury. This was a very positive experience for both service users and students. The plan is to extend the conversation cafes to other Allied Health Professional student disciplines and increase the number of service users involved.

Equality Action Plan and Disability Action Plan

The five Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts and the NI Ambulance Service (NIAS) worked collaboratively to develop and consult on a five year Equality Action Plan and Disability Action Plan.



The draft plans were shaped and developed with input from a range of stakeholders during three pre-consultation online listening events. A public consultation on the plans provided the opportunity for interested parties to comment on the proposed content and to share ideas, knowledge and experiences to inform the final plans.

Wicked Wednesday

In Larne Adult Centre we hold monthly service user meetings this is to give our service users a voice on how their service is delivered. This also ensures we adhere to RQIA Daycare Minimum standards, Standard 8: *Service users' views and comments shape the quality of services and facilities provided by the centre*. As part of February's service user meeting we invited all service users who avail of lunches at the centre to complete a questionnaire, giving feedback on the meals provided. Catering managers from Antrim Area Hospital and Whiteabbey Hospital catering departments were invited to join our meeting, service user representatives then fed back the outcomes of the questionnaires.

During this meeting the "Wicked Wednesday" Wagon visit was born. This is where we have themed visits from the food wagon. Our first visit theme was "build a burger", David Smyth (Antrim AH Catering Manager) and Karina Waterson (Whiteabbey Catering Manager) donned their aprons and served up a treat. Service user Leon was given the task of coordinating the event, which he loved.

Feedback from the service users has been really positive and there are already plans for the next event themed "chippy".



Paediatric and Neonatal Clinical Psychology Service

The Paediatric and Neonatal Clinical Psychology Service has been working alongside the My Journey team, and with families attending our service, to develop a series of podcasts for sharing with families and with staff.



Families often speak of feeling isolated in their experience of having a baby in hospital requiring neonatal care, in trying to adjust to life with a health condition (such as diabetes or epilepsy) as part of it, balancing the demands of family life with health-related demands, or managing life as a young person growing up with the medical system as part of their lives.

To date our podcast series provides easily accessible information around some of what may be expected in terms of the emotional and practical experience of life on the Neonatal Unit, or living with diabetes or epilepsy. The content of the episodes has been shaped by young people and their families. In some of our episodes, we have spoken with young people as to their lived experience of growing up with diabetes. Lined up for future podcasts, we have more very brave young people willing to share their experiences and parents/carers willing to share their stories. We also plan to speak to staff members who support these families.



These podcasts will be available to all young people, families and staff members, and we hope they go some way to aiding connection, reducing isolation, and increasing accessibility to helpful resources. The My Journey team will be supporting us along the way in gathering feedback from families and staff; including their ideas for future podcasts. Our hope is that this is the start of a co-created project, that helps the voice of service users be heard.



Neonatal Parental Engagement

In March 2024 Neonatal staff met with parents who had experienced neonatal care in Antrim Hospital. This was the first Neonatal Parental Engagement meeting and was primarily to gather information regarding parent's neonatal experience in Antrim Neonatal unit, to learn what was important to parents when using the service and what changes would be of benefit for parents/cares and their babies. It was also part of a Regional Project regarding Family Integrated Care.

Family Integrated Care (FICare) is a model of neonatal care which promotes a culture of partnership between families and staff; enabling and empowering parents to become confident, knowledgeable and independent primary care givers. Neonatal units, such as Antrim, with a strong FICare philosophy nurture families into this role by listening to them, building on their strengths, and encouraging their participation in experiences and decision-making to enhance control and independence. The FICare model ensures that they can be a family as soon as possible; creating space for necessary medical care whilst facilitating the nurturing bond and love that only they can provide for their baby.

Whilst Antrim Neonatal Unit have embedded many aspects of FICare it was important that we listened and reflected on parents experience so we could improve and develop services.

Overall feedback was extremely positive and areas such as effective communication between staff and parents, including both mothers and fathers in all aspects of care and parent facilities, were extremely important.

As part of our parental involvement parents are also invited to review neonatal documentation being developed e.g. Parent Leaflets/Parent Questionnaire.

Hearing parents experience was extremely powerful and we felt extremely privileged to part of their experience.

We plan to continue with our Parental Engagement Meetings and hope to have our next meeting in September 2024.



Corporate Plan Engagement Event

An engagement event was held on Friday 8 March with service users, carers and community and voluntary sector stakeholders. This dedicated workshop supported the Trust to share information and listen to feedback on the draft NHSCT Corporate Plan.

The workshop aimed to share more information with attendees about the drivers behind our corporate plan setting out in draft the direction for the next three years. It provided an opportunity for the Trust to ask questions or seek clarification on the priorities, and to hear from stakeholders about their views/suggestions for further shaping our corporate plan objectives.



Promoting Informed Choice Breast Imaging Workshop

The NHSCT Breast Imaging Department recognised the need to involve transgender/gender diverse (TGD), gender fluid and non-binary service users to understand how the service can better target this group of service users. The initiative was shared at regional Promoting Informed Choice (PIC) meetings and was widely supported by the Public Health Agency and breast imaging teams across the Trust.

The NHSCT Breast Imaging Department hosted a PIC workshop at The Dunadry Hotel, to address issues such as communication, inclusive resources and barriers to screening uptake. Invitations to the workshop were extended to regional colleagues from breast imaging, the PHA and the LGBTQIA+ community. In preparation for the workshop, gender identity and sexual orientation training took place, which a member of the Rainbow Project facilitated on the Antrim site.



Sixteen representatives who attended the workshop address various topics throughout the course of the day. The feedback and discussions were engaging and beneficial for all organisations represented. The post-workshop evaluation indicated that participants found the day extremely positive and that it would be beneficial to develop a working group to further address the issues raised, as well as to enhance collaborations between the NHSCT and the LGBTQIA+ community.

This group will meet on a quarterly basis. Those in attendance also welcomed the opportunity for further collaboration between the NHSCT and LGBTQIA+ organisations, with a view to hosting breast awareness programmes at community venues within the northern locality.

Northern Region Recovery College

The Northern Trust Recovery College is an educational service that registered 549 students, to complete a range of different health and well-being courses throughout each year. All sessions delivered by the Recovery College are co-produced by a variety of individuals including staff and service users.

Each year the college holds an initial planning day that includes service users, whereby a plan for the year ahead is agreed. These plans are based largely on both formal and informal service user feedback, gathered at sessions throughout the college year. Service User feedback is the tool that drives how the college develops and evolves each academic year. Each individual college session is then co-produced by both staff and service users, giving both lived and learned experiences and insights to enhance the work that we do. The Service Users involved throughout this academic year have reported positively on their experience. They note involvement and the sharing of experiences to be helpful and encourages them to feel valued. As a service we believe that by having the diversity of experiences and opinions to shape all that we do, enhances the overall work of the Recovery College.



RECOVERY COLLEGE

The Palliative Care Service Improvement Team continues to engage with service users in a wide range of improvement activities and projects. The overall aim is to improve the care for people living with a palliative condition and support for those important to them. In addition, the team engage with the public to improve understanding of palliative and end of life care so they are better equipped to support people in their community who are at end of life or those who are bereaved. Some of the activities and projects include:

- Advance care planning awareness sessions for the public delivered as part of the Chatty Libraries scheme.
- Advance care planning presentation for the Trust lung cancer support group members – this group also provided feedback on the design of service user information for a new resource.
- Through an engagement event with the public and key stakeholders, priorities were identified for the development of the new Trust Community Specialist Palliative Care Team.
- Engage with service users to obtain feedback and advice on the content and design for three service leaflets and also the design of a life planner booklet.
- Provide palliative and end of life care information stands for the public through events such as Mid Ulster Loneliness network/Age Friendly Strategy event; International Rural Women's day event - Visible, Influential and Valued and Making Connections event for Ageism Action Day.
- Through a decluttering themed sessions increase awareness of the importance of the general public to consider the components of planning ahead for end of life care.



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Planning Ahead during Dementia Action Week



Planning ahead should be an important part of life for all adults. Advance Care Planning is particularly important for people living with dementia, as the person's ability to be involved in decision-making could reduce as dementia progresses.

Northern Trust Dementia Navigators and the Palliative Care Service Improvement Team developed a group-based approach to Advance Care Planning, following consultation with the Alzheimer's Society and Dementia NI members. The programme aimed to deliver a user-friendly approach that provides information and resources that enable people with dementia and their carers to make plans for the future. The information was shared in two face-to-face sessions to individuals recently diagnosed with dementia and their carers.

The evaluation and outcomes were very positive with all participants recording an increase in awareness of Advance Care Planning, support and tools available.

Participants reported progress with formal plans when followed up after six weeks, without the need for further professional support.



Grief Ally Workshop

A workshop to increase awareness about palliative care and grief amongst Year 10 schoolchildren in a local school. Through a Grief Ally workshop (Cruse) the children learnt how they could support a friend/family member who is grieving. In addition, the children were invited to design a piece of artwork for a bereavement card to be used by the new Community Specialist Palliative Care Team. There was an art exhibition in the local shopping centre for awareness of palliative and bereavement teams with public voting on the designs. A local artist and a service user were asked to help choose the designs for the final cards.



Advanced Cancer Toolkit

Cancer Services informed the Palliative Care Service Improvement Team (SIT) of feedback received from a Service User after their Breast Cancer Health and Well-Being event. The lady, who had secondary breast cancer, said that it felt like closure for people but nothing was closing for her and it didn't really meet her needs. The SIT scoped existing health and well-being resources for people living with advanced cancer and found nothing regionally and limited information nationally. We then met with the service user, who turned out to be a former nurse and lecturer. With her help, we formed an amazing focus group of local people living with advanced cancer and work on the resource began. Following regular focus groups, the service users co-designed a new online resource – the Advanced Cancer Toolkit. They named the resource, wrote the introduction, choosing the wording to ensure people felt safe when accessing the information. They identified topics and partnered with palliative and oncology professionals to ensure the information in their presentations was clear and meaningful.

As one of our service users said, "It's really important that patients' views are considered. Patients see things that staff don't see. We understand how we like to be spoken to and we are the experts of our own condition. So if we can contribute to resources like this it makes it a really rich resource for other people to use."

The Advanced Cancer Toolkit was formally launched on 27th June with the help of our service users and we are planning awareness sessions with them for staff next. The resource will continue to grow as more topics are addressed. Our service users bring their lived experiences which gives credibility to this work and reassurance for those accessing it. They also bring a range of skills, enthusiasm and reality which keeps us as professionals focussed and reminds us of the value of this work. It has been a privilege to partner with them. Check out the resource on our NHSCT website in the cancer services section

[Advanced Cancer Toolkit - Northern Health and Social Care Trust \(hscni.net\)](http://hscni.net)



Help us make a welcoming space

The Trust is delighted to announce the installation of two unique pieces of artwork at Antrim Area Hospital and Causeway Hospital which celebrate the diversity of our Team North staff.

The artwork, which depicts some members of the diverse workforce at both hospital sites, is the result of partnership working between the Trust and Arts Care who commissioned Artist in Residence Helen Bradbury to produce the two pieces. Helen worked closely with staff from both hospitals and the evolving dialogue helped inform the final artwork.

Commenting on her involvement, Helen said: “The artwork was developed from photographs which staff submitted of themselves. Even though I didn’t know the staff, the photographs allowed me to get a feeling of who they were.”

“The two pieces were developed in tandem but it’s really interesting that they have come out quite different. I asked staff to submit personal items that I could subtly introduce into the pieces. It was lovely to be able to embed these little personal symbols into the pieces and that was my thank you to the staff involved.”

Owen Harkin, Chair of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group, said: “The artwork plays a vital role in promoting diversity and creating an inclusive and welcoming environment for our patients, visitors and staff.”

“We are truly honoured to have this artwork in place. The artwork is an enduring reminder of the positive impact our diverse workforce makes to the healthcare we provide, and a reminder of our shared obligations to colleagues from all backgrounds. This initiative also promotes representation and celebrates the diverse communities we live in.”

The artwork can be viewed on Level B at Antrim Area Hospital and in the main foyer at Causeway Hospital.



Acknowledgement

We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to everyone who continues to be a champion of Involvement. Your commitment will help shape our future services.

Please contact the Involvement Team for further information on our work or if you wish to join our Involvement Network.

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