

Quarterly Newsletter

Edition 1 | Autumn 2026



CFHD Participation Quarterly Newsletter

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- Current projects
- Recruitment update
- Four Cornerstones
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- Celebrations
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- Your Voice in Action
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EVERY VOICE COUNTS

Children, young people and families shaping services together

Sharing progress, opportunities, achievements and the difference participation makes

In this edition

57

Active participation projects

WINNERS

Congratulations to Gracie and Zero

139

Expert by Experience attendances across 117 interviews

NEW

Upcoming Projects: Accessible buildings, Reward and Recognition,

ICB

Deep-dive presentation with Callum

YOUR VOICE

visible change and feedback loops

Welcome

Why this newsletter matters

This first quarterly update brings together current projects, ways to get involved, celebrations and clear examples of how feedback is influencing change.

Welcome to the first CFHD Participation Newsletter. This quarterly update will share current and upcoming projects, involvement opportunities, recruitment activity, achievements, training and examples of how feedback has influenced change.

YOU SAID

“We do not consistently hear how our contributions have informed change.”

WE DID

CFHD has developed a quarterly newsletter so contributors can see progress, outcomes and next steps.

WHAT CHANGES

Participation will not end when a meeting, survey or project finishes. Project leads will be encouraged to provide updates during the work and at completion.

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Current projects

Co-producing improvement across CFHD

Help shape the CFHD Participation Strategy 2027-2032

CFHD is co-producing a new five-year strategy with children, young people, parents, carers, Experts by Experience, staff and partner organisations. It will set out how lived experience influences services and how CFHD will improve consistency, representation, capability and impact.

- Embed participation across all pathways
- Reach voices that are currently underrepresented
- Make involvement accessible, flexible and inclusive
- Build staff confidence and capability
- Measure the difference participation makes
- Tell people what happened because they contributed

NEXT STEP

A hybrid focus group on participation models and reward and recognition is planned for 8 October 2026, with alternative ways to contribute for those unable to attend.

Improving transitions into adult services

Young people and families are helping CFHD explore what makes transitions feel planned and coordinated, how information should be shared, how repetition and gaps can be reduced, and how continuity can be strengthened.

Communication Passport

The co-produced Communication Passport gives children and young people a flexible way to share how they communicate, what matters to them and what helps when they feel anxious or distressed. It has been approved for implementation across CFHD and is available electronically or on paper. The next stage of development will focus on producing Easy Read options and a version designed for children under five and their families.

YOUR VOICE IN ACTION

Young people told us they did not want to repeatedly explain their needs. Together, we developed a resource that helps professionals understand and respond to their communication preferences.

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Eating Disorders lived-experience pilot

The pathway is developing a pilot to strengthen lived-experience involvement in groups and support for young people and families. The proposal will consider volunteer roles, preparation, training, supervision, flexibility and evaluation.

Mental-health pathways: supporting equitable access for children known to social care

Following the transfer of CFHD's Child in Care Mental Health and Therapeutic Wellbeing Service teams to Devon children's social care in September 2026, CFHD mental-health operational and clinical leads are working with the Participation Team, Experts by Experience and Avocado's Impact CIC.

The group is developing a Standard Operating Procedure to support appropriate access and reasonable adjustments for care-experienced children and young people and for children known to social care. Further updates will be shared as the project progresses.

Welcoming Spaces: Lescaze

The Lescaze project aims to improve the accessibility, functionality and overall experience of the building for children, young people, families and staff. Participation will help shape reception and waiting areas, accessibility, comfort, information, privacy and the overall welcome offered to families.

Occupational Therapy report improvement

Families who have recently received an OT report are being asked what was helpful, whether the report was easy to understand, what was missing and what should change. Early feedback differed from professional expectations, reinforcing why families need to be asked directly.

Suicide Prevention Day: young people sharing their experiences

To mark Suicide Prevention Day, four CFHD Young Advisers worked with the Participation Team to develop blogs and videos based on their personal experiences. The work aimed to raise awareness, reduce stigma and encourage other young people to seek help and support when they need it.

The young people chose ways of sharing that felt meaningful and authentic. Their contributions highlighted the importance of talking about mental health, recognising when support may be needed and understanding that help is available.

The videos were shared across social media on 10 September 2026, alongside links to accompanying blog posts on the CFHD website.

YOUR VOICE IN ACTION

Young people used their experiences to support others, raise awareness and promote conversations about mental health and wellbeing.

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Core Care Record: improving how outcomes and experiences are recorded

Four parent and carer Experts by Experience are working with the DPT Senior Operations Team to support the development of Core Care Record practices. The work focuses on Patient Reported Outcome Measures, Patient Reported Experience Measures and goal-based care approaches.

The group is exploring:

- How information can be recorded consistently
- What information matters most to families
- How experiences and outcomes can be captured meaningfully
- How recording practices can support person-centred care
- How family voices can remain visible within care records

NEXT STEP

Continue gathering feedback and testing proposed developments before wider implementation across services.

Planning Care Well: strengthening care planning and outcomes recording

Three parent and carer Experts by Experience and one Young Adviser are working with the DPT Senior Operations Team on the Planning Care Well programme. The group is contributing service-user perspectives to learning and development on care planning, outcome measures and clinical recording.

The project is exploring what good care planning looks like from a family perspective, how outcome measures can be used meaningfully, consistent recording approaches, clear expectations for staff and how records can better reflect family priorities.

NEXT STEP

Continue engaging staff and Experts by Experience to develop guidance, learning resources and consistent recording standards.

Eating Disorders Psychoeducation Group

Parents and carers with lived experience continue to contribute to psychoeducation groups for families receiving support from the Eating Disorders Team. They share experiences, reflections and practical insights that can offer reassurance and understanding to families at an earlier stage of their journey.

The group provides opportunities to:

- Share personal experiences and learning
- Discuss challenges and sources of support
- Explore what has been helpful during recovery
- Offer encouragement and hope to other families
- Inform ongoing service development

NEXT STEP

Continue developing lived-experience involvement and explore how young people may contribute safely and meaningfully as guest speakers.

YOUR VOICE IN ACTION

Parents, carers and young people are using their experiences to support others and shape how psychoeducation is delivered.

Recruitment involvement

Since April 2025, 139 Expert by Experience attendances have been recorded across 117 interviews. CFHD is developing clearer guidance, preparation, support, reflective spaces and reasonable-adjustment processes so involvement is meaningful and consistent.

Recruitment update: developing a consistent standard

Experts by Experience continue to help CFHD recruit staff who demonstrate compassion, respect, strong communication and the ability to work in partnership with children, young people and families. Recruitment involvement has expanded beyond mental-health services, with participation across clinical, operational and leadership roles and more recent involvement in physical-health and Specialist Learning Disability recruitment.

CFHD is improving recruitment involvement by:

- Developing clearer guidance for recruiting managers
- Improving how interview involvement is recorded
- Establishing when Experts by Experience should be included
- Providing suitable preparation, training and support
- Developing reflective support following recruitment activity
- Considering reasonable adjustments and sensory or psychological safety needs

YOUR VOICE IN ACTION

The focus is not numbers alone. The aim is meaningful, well-supported involvement that gives lived experience a genuine influence on recruitment decisions.

Four Cornerstones

Building on strong foundations

CFHD is working with Devon County Council to support the Four Cornerstones approach. The Specialist Learning Disability pathway has now completed both its staff self-assessment and a parent and carer assessment, providing two perspectives on how families experience the service.

Six anonymous parent and carer responses were received. The overall parent/carers average was 4.67 out of 5, with 23 of 24 ratings scored at 4 or 5 and 18 receiving the maximum rating of 5.

Welcome and Care and Communicate were jointly the highest-rated areas at 4.83 out of 5. Families particularly valued empathy, active listening, responsive communication, advocacy, joined-up support and practical strategies that made a meaningful difference.

The feedback also identified barriers relating to lengthy or repetitive forms, referral delays, continuity and re-entry into the service, repeated storytelling, digital accessibility, and the need for more direct or face-to-face contact in some circumstances.

Cornerstone	Staff Average	Parent / carer average	What it means and what families highlighted
Welcome and Care	4.16	4.83	Comfortable, kind and taken seriously. Empathy, compassion and feeling supported .
Value and Include	4.26	4.33	Views matter and shape decisions. Positive overall; forms, delays and limited direct contact need attention.
Communicate	4.26	4.83	Clear information and active listening. Clear updates, active listening and remembering what matters.
Work in Partnership	4.32	4.67	Planning support together. Advocacy, meeting support and joined-up working.

Strengths identified

- Empathy, compassion and active listening
- Clear and responsive communication
- Advocacy and support in meetings
- Practical strategies that make a difference
- Joined-up support and hospital liaison
- Families feeling remembered and understood



Priorities for improvement

- Simplify referral, consent and assessment paperwork, Improve updates about referrals and delays
- Reduce duplication and digital-access barriers, Reduce the need for families to repeat their story
- Strengthen continuity and routes back into support
- Consider more direct or face-to-face contact where appropriate

Participation in the spotlight

CFHD and lived experience presented directly to commissioners

ICB Participation Deep Dive: 24 September 2026

Eleanor Elms and Callum Pester presented CFHD Participation: Progress, Impact and Next Steps to the NHS Devon ICB Contract Review Meeting. The presentation described participation across every pathway, recruitment involvement, visible examples of change, accessible feedback, the Four Cornerstones pilot and the next phase of the Participation Strategy.

KEY MESSAGE

Move from participation as a series of activities to participation embedded in service design, improvement and quality assurance.

What children, young people and families want

- Influence, not attendance
- Preparation and support
- Feedback throughout the work
- Representative voices
- Involvement before solutions are fixed

A powerful contribution from Callum

Callum shared his lived experience and explained how participation can influence current and future provision. Feedback in the meeting chat described the presentation as powerful, moving and inspiring, and recognised Callum as an asset to CFHD participation and recruitment.



“So powerful, thank you.”

“Really inspiring to understand how you have drawn on your own personal journey to impact provision for current and future users.”

“Callum is great in interview panels too, such an asset as a young adviser.”

“Huge thank you to Callum and all those involved. Really important work which is central to getting services right for young people.”

Celebrating lived-experience leadership

Recognising people who turn experience into change

Gracie wins the National Lived Experience Award 2026

AWARD PHOTO

Gracie accepting the Hope and Positivity Award



WINNER: Hope and Positivity Award

Gracie won for her work on Distress Management booklets, a two-year project with the South West Provider Collaborative for young people in inpatient settings.

Created from lived experience, the resource helps young people self-soothe and regulate, supports de-escalation and aims to reduce reliance on restrictive practice.

A practical resource helping to change inpatient culture.

Zero Jackson wins the Pride of DPT Award 2026

AWARD PHOTO

Zero Jackson, winner of the Inspirational Colleague Award



WINNER: Inspirational Colleague Award — Non-clinical

The nomination recognised the sustained work Zero had put into the Young Advisor role.

It highlighted the importance and value of that contribution to the service.

"I feel proud of my contribution to the service."

CELEBRATE

National Lived Experience Day is on 15 October 2026. CFHD is considering activities that celebrate completed projects, visible change, award winners and new opportunities to get involved.

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Coming up

New opportunities to shape accessible and welcoming services

NEW: CFHD Accessible Buildings Project

CFHD is developing a co-produced accessibility-audit project so children, young people, parent carers and adults with relevant lived experience can help review service bases. The project will seek views from wheelchair users and people with physical disabilities across different localities, including North Devon.

PROJECT AIM

Identify barriers, record lived-experience evidence and show how feedback about CFHD buildings leads to action.

What participants may explore

Getting in Entrances, ramps, doors and routes	Moving around Corridors, lifts, room layouts and wheelchair access	Waiting well Seating, comfort, noise and sensory needs
Information Signs, wayfinding and accessible formats	Privacy Reception, conversations and personal space	Belonging Whether spaces feel welcoming and inclusive

GET INVOLVED

If you are a wheelchair user, have relevant experience of physical accessibility, contact cfhd.participation@nhs.net.

New: Reward and Recognition Framework

CFHD is reviewing how children, young people and Experts by Experience are recognised and rewarded for their contributions. The developing framework will consider payment, vouchers and other forms of recognition, alongside clear information, informed choice, preparation, reasonable adjustments, safety and support.

The proposal will be internally reviewed before progressing through CFHD and DPT governance arrangements. Young people and Experts by Experience will continue to influence the final framework and how its impact is demonstrated.

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Your Voice in Action

Showing how feedback leads to visible change

Initial-assessment explainer video	Children and young people said they could feel nervous before an assessment. The video was co-designed, tested, refined and published.
Communication Passport	Young people wanted to explain their communication needs without repeatedly retelling their story. A flexible passport is now available.
Welcoming clinical environments	Young people's ideas influenced the Evergreen House refurbishment, creating 17 bookable clinical spaces.
More ways to give feedback	Updated feedback cards, telephone contact, written routes and planned iPad stations reduce reliance on QR codes alone.
Reflective spaces	Young advisers asked for opportunities to reflect after challenging involvement. CFHD is developing dedicated reflective support.
Quarterly newsletter	Contributors asked to hear what changed. This newsletter provides a regular and visible feedback loop.

Coming soon

Stay connected and choose how you would like to contribute

Look out for

- Participation mini-series videos featuring Cal, Callum and Jess.
- Experts by Experience training and reflective-support sessions.
- The DPT Together annual celebration event on 11 November 2026.
- Participation Strategy engagement.
- Communication Passport Easy Read options.
- Communication Passport version for children under five.
- Accessible Buildings audits.
- Reward and Recognition Framework.
- OT report co-design.
- Four Cornerstones action plan.
- Planning Care Well and Core Care Record updates.
- Eating Disorders lived-experience development.

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Would you like to...

- Help improve a service?
- Review patient or family information?
- Join a focus group or project?
- Support staff recruitment?
- Share your experience through a blog, film or presentation?
- Help shape the CFHD Participation Strategy?
- Hear about future opportunities?

GET INVOLVED

cfhd.participation@nhs.net

You decide how much or how little you would like to contribute. We will discuss your interests, preferred ways of participating and any support or adjustments that would help.

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PARTICIPATION UPDATE

September

Your voice shapes change!

Working together for better CYP's health



Recruitment & Interviews

- Supported recruitment for:
- Specialist MHP for Urgent Care pathway
- Recruit to Train CBT Practitioners for North MERs
- OT for Experts at Hand team



Lived Experience Influence

- EbEs gave feedback on the use of AI in initial assessment notes.
- Parent/carers involved in 'Planning Care Well' work with DPT Operations Team.
- Parent attended the EDI meeting for the first time.
- Met with ex-service user with physical and learning disabilities – exploring physical access to CFHD sites.
- Met with members of South ED team to discuss working with EbEs and service users to create and display artwork in therapy rooms.



Communications & Awareness

- Three short films featuring EbEs were completed and published on the CFHD website and YouTube.
- Astro and Cal produced a film clip to support Suicide Prevention Day to share on CFHD social media.
- Emi and Astro wrote blogs to raise awareness of Suicide Prevention Day.

Thanks to our EbE's & CFHD colleagues!



Partnership & Service Development

- Met with Together Team to compare project and interview tracking with a view to bringing them in line with each other.
- Participation team met with Together, payroll and HR colleagues to continue developing EbE remuneration approach.
- Callum joined Ellie to give a presentation on participation in CFHD to commissioners at the ICB contract review meeting.



Events, Engagement & Recognition

- Attended Teignmouth Pride with Zero.
- Astro, Dani and Robin attended the CFHD Fun day at Evergreen House.



Congratulations Gracie!

You won the Hope and Positivity category at the National Lived Experience Awards!

Well done!

September in Numbers

3

Recruitment Panels Supported

3

Films Published

2

Suicide Prevention Day Resources Created

1

ICB Presentation Delivered

1

National Award Won

1

New Parent Representative at EDI

Together, we're making a difference!

Involve Empower Inspire

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Your voice shapes change!



Working together for better CYP's health



PARTICIPATION UPDATE

August



Interviews:

- Senior Mental Health Practitioners for the Urgent Care pathway - 3-separate interview days.
- Assistant Psychologist for North MERs - 2 days of interviews.
- Specialist Mental Health Practitioner for Neurodiversity pathway (YP provided questions for the panel as not available to attend).



4 parent/carer EbEs joined work with DPT on developing the Core Care record.



Discussions held regarding paid involvement and remuneration for EbE time. Particularly for under 16's.



2 young advisors continued working with managers and clinicians on improvements to the Urgent Care Pathway clinical model.



New joining forms created and sent out to streamline the Participation team's way of collecting and storing data.



Cal led a shared learning session on Communication Passport.



Participation Feedback survey's created and in use - for EbE's and professionals to complete after any project, session or recruitment engagement.



Dani and Robin continued to attend CFHD CIC MH Project 2026 meetings - joined by representatives from Avocados Impact CIC.



Continued work within the Transitions project working groups.



2 EbEs recruited (1 YP & 1 parent)



Continued work within the EDI working group.

Thanks to our EbE's & CFHD colleagues!



Together, we're making a difference!

Involve
Empower
Inspire