



# TrustTalk

Autumn / Winter 2025

## Nominations for Values Awards 2026

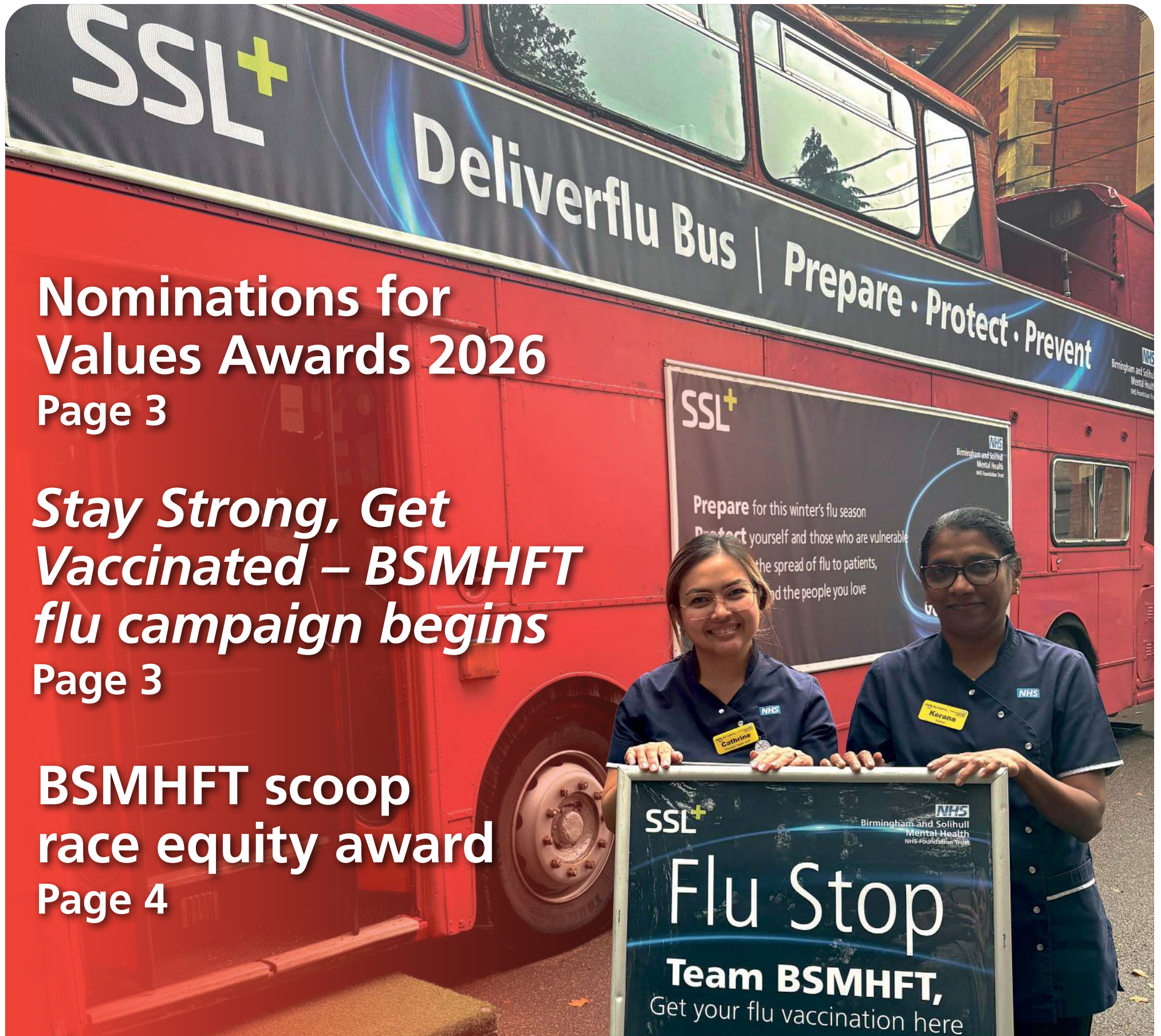
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## *Stay Strong, Get Vaccinated – BSMHFT flu campaign begins*

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# Welcome to Trust Talk

As we leave autumn behind and look ahead to winter, it's a time for reflection and renewal across Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust.

Since the last edition of Trust Talk, we've celebrated many remarkable achievements - like Clare Gratrix's fourth consecutive high jump win and the inspiring recovery journeys shared by service users in Solihull. Our Recovery College is pausing to gather feedback and shape its future, ensuring it continues to support mental health and wellbeing for years to come.

Speak Up Week brought colleagues together to champion openness and follow-up, reinforcing our commitment to a culture where every voice is heard and acted upon.

We're really proud that the Trust has been shortlisted for the prestigious NHS Race Equality Award at the HSJ Awards, recognising our bold and transformative work in embedding anti-racist practice and supporting equity for all.

We've also launched a major campaign around the introduction of our new Sexual Safety Policy, reinforcing our zero-tolerance approach to sexual misconduct. This policy applies to all colleagues, volunteers, students, contractors and visitors, and demonstrates our commitment to the NHS Sexual Safety Charter. Every one of us has a role to play in creating a safe, respectful culture and we encourage everyone to read the policy, challenge inappropriate behaviour and share its importance with our teams.

Our new Smoke-Free BSMHFT policy is now in place, supporting healthier environments for everyone and the launch of the About Me Communication Passport on RiO is helping us deliver more personalised care, putting service users' voices at the heart of everything we do.

Looking forward, we're excited for the opening of Birmingham's first 24/7 Neighbourhood Mental Health Centre. This pioneering new model will offer round-the-clock, community-led support, making mental health care more accessible, compassionate and tailored to individual needs. It's a significant step in

transforming how we support people in our communities - ensuring mental health help is available whenever it's needed.

As we move through the colder months, our Winter Wellness Checklist offers practical advice to help you, your loved ones and our community stay safe and well.

Thank you for your ongoing dedication and compassion. Together, let's continue to support each other and embrace the opportunities this next season brings.

Enjoy the read!

**Patrick Nyarumbu MBE**  
Executive Director of Strategy,  
People and Partnerships

**Dr Linda Cullen**  
Non-Executive Director



Patrick Nyarumbu MBE



Dr Linda Cullen

## Contact us

To contact our Trust with any general enquiries:  
☎ 0121 301 0000 (our switchboard)

Trust headquarters address:  
✉ Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust  
Uffculme Centre  
52 Queensbridge Rd  
Birmingham  
B13 8QY

For urgent mental health support, call  
☎ NHS 111, option 2  
This line is available 24 hours, seven days a week.

24/7 Mental Health Text Support for Birmingham and Solihull  
✉ Text Space to 85258

For mental health advice and support, call the mental health helpline - in partnership with Birmingham Mind  
☎ 0121 262 3555  
☎ 0800 915 9292



## Keep up with us online

🌐 [bsmhft.nhs.uk](https://bsmhft.nhs.uk)  
🌐 [forwardthinkingbirmingham.nhs.uk](https://forwardthinkingbirmingham.nhs.uk)  
📘 [facebook.com/NHSbsmhft](https://facebook.com/NHSbsmhft)  
📷 @bsmhft\_nhs  
📍 Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust

## Welcome to Peter Axon, our new Non-Executive Director

We are pleased to welcome Peter Axon, our new Non-Executive Director (NED) to BSMHFT.

Peter started his career as a finance trainee in the NHS. After qualifying as an accountant, he held various roles in public and private sector finance functions across the country. He became Chief Finance Officer of Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust in 2009, supporting them to achieve Foundation Trust status and the construction of Birmingham's new Dental Hospital.

In 2019, Peter became Chief Executive of a leading mental health trust before becoming Chief Executive of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board in 2021. In July of this year, Peter retired from full time work and we're delighted to have him as part of our Board.



## Meet our Board of Directors



Roisin Fallon-Williams  
Chief Executive



Philip Gayle  
Chair



Patrick Nyarumbu MBE  
Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Strategy, People and Partnerships



Dr Fabida Aria  
Executive Medical Director



Vanessa Devlin  
Executive Director of Operations



Lisa Stalley-Green  
Executive Director of Quality and Safety (Chief Nurse)



Dave Tomlinson  
Executive Director of Finance



Bal Claire  
Deputy Chair and Non-Executive Director



Linda Cullen  
Non-Executive Director



Winston Weir  
Non-Executive Director



Monica Shafaq  
Non-Executive Director



Sue Bedward  
Non-Executive Director



Nick Moor  
Associate Non-Executive Director



Peter Axon  
Non-Executive Director



# Stay Strong, Get Vaccinated

This year’s flu vaccination campaign officially launched on Wednesday 1 October, promoting the important message: Stay Strong, Get Vaccinated.

To mark the start of the annual vaccination drive, the ‘Deliverflu’ bus – acting as a giant billboard on wheels – visited the Uffculme Centre, Maple Leaf and Reaside sites, bringing extra visibility and encouragement for colleagues to protect themselves against influenza.

The full-size double-decker bus, badged with campaign branding was secured free of charge by the Communications team.



The campaign has been co-ordinated across multiple partners within the Trust, ensuring Team BSMHFT and SSL colleagues can easily access vaccination clinics at sites across the organisation. Flu vaccination clinics will continue to run throughout the winter period, encouraging everyone to get their jab, not only to protect themselves, but also their families and the people they care for.

By working together, the Trust and its partners are helping to ensure everyone stays healthy and resilient throughout the winter.

It’s not too late to get your flu vaccine and protect your family, colleagues and the people you’re caring for.

Stay strong

Get vaccinated

BSMHFT STAFF  
FLU CLINICS

For Team BSMHFT flu colleagues, scan the QR code to see the latest list of flu clinics available.

FOR FLU INFO  
SCAN HERE

Scan the code for more information on the flu vaccine.

## Nominations open for Values Awards 2026



It’s time to celebrate the incredible people who make a difference every day. We’re calling on all Team BSMHFT and SSL staff to nominate colleagues who truly embody our Trust Values of Compassionate, Inclusive and Committed.

Awards include:

- Rising Star Award
- Team of the Year – Clinical Services
- Team of the Year – Professional Support Services
- Quality Improvement, Research and Innovation Award
- Compassionate Award
- Inclusive Award
- Committed Award
- Lifetime Achievement Award
- Caring Minds Charity Champion Award

Patients, service users, carers and families can also nominate for the Mustak Mirza (Service User and Carer Choice) Award, via the BSMHFT website.

Nominations open Monday 1 December 2025 until midnight, Sunday 1 February 2026.

Scan the QR code for category information and to submit your nomination.



## Welcoming our new Lead and Deputy Lead Governors

Following a formal election process, we are pleased to announce the appointment of our new Lead and Deputy Lead Governors.

Congratulations to David Slatter, Public Governor for Solihull, Coventry and Warwickshire, who has been appointed as Lead Governor and to Chris Barber, Public Governor for East and North Birmingham/Black Country Boroughs, who will serve as Deputy Lead Governor.

As a Foundation Trust, our Council of

Governors plays a vital role in representing the interests of staff, patients, service users, carers and the wider public. The council is made up of elected and appointed governors, all of whom volunteer their time to help shape our services. Staff Governors, both clinical and non-clinical, are also appointed to offer direct support to colleagues across the Trust.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank John Travers for his dedication and service. After six years as Non-Clinical Staff Governor and three years as Lead Governor, John’s term has now come to an end.

**David Slatter,**  
Public Governor for  
Solihull, Coventry and  
Warwickshire



**Chris Barber,**  
Public Governor  
for East and North  
Birmingham/Black  
Country Boroughs

Follow us on  
Instagram

Did you know that Team BSMHFT is on Instagram? Follow @bsmhft\_nhs for the latest mental health news, support services, staff celebrations and much more. We are always looking at new ways to communicate and share information about the work we do across the Trust. Used by 35 million people in the UK alone, Instagram is helping us to do just that. Why not hit that follow button to discover what exciting things we are working on.



# Creativity and courage through art

To mark Remembrance Day this year, OpCOURAGE hosted a powerful arts exhibition honouring the voices of West Midlands military veterans.

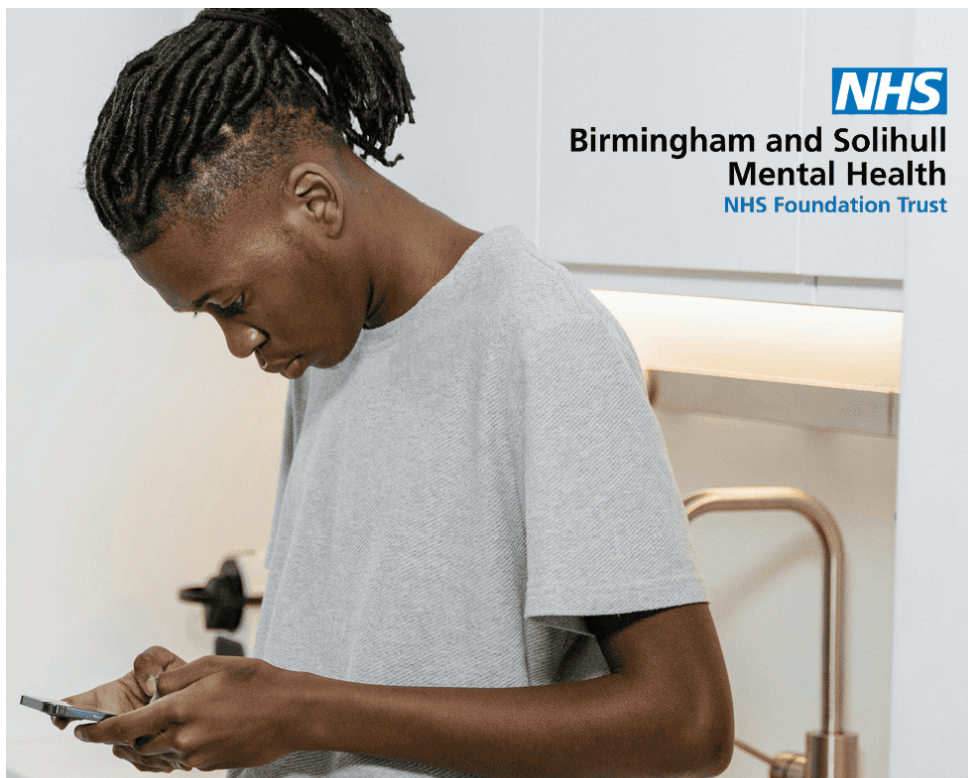
Veteran Voices: *Light and Shade*, held at Worcester's Guildhall from 7–9 November, showcased poetry, painting and creative expression that explored themes of identity, service, recovery and hope. Organised in partnership with STEPWAY CIO and Art 4, and generously funded by Caring Minds, the exhibition offered a moving tribute to veterans' lived experiences and the healing power of creativity.

The final day was reserved for invited guests, who engaged in meaningful conversations with veterans and facilitators. Visitors praised the emotional depth and honesty of the work, which helped bridge understanding between civilian and veteran communities.

The event was organised by members of our OpCOURAGE team. OpCOURAGE is the NHS mental health service for military veterans,

reservists and service leavers, providing specialist, confidential support tailored to the unique experiences of those who have served, helping individuals with issues such as PTSD, anxiety, depression and adjustment to civilian life.

Through exhibitions like *Light and Shade*, OpCOURAGE continues to highlight the importance of creative expression in recovery and connection, while honouring the sacrifices and resilience of the veteran community.



**NHS**  
Birmingham and Solihull  
Mental Health  
NHS Foundation Trust

## Feeling worried or alone?

You don't have to talk out loud to be heard - we're holding space for you.

**Text 'Space' to 85258**

**Free, confidential, 24/7**

in partnership with  
**shout**

## BSMHFT shortlisted for NHS Race Equality Award



Pictured from left to right are Eben Akume, Manisha Panesar, Jas Kaur and Lynn Phung

We are very proud to have been shortlisted for the NHS Race Equality Award at the 2025 HSJ Awards, in recognition of our bold and transformative work in embedding anti-racist practice across the organisation.

The Trust's co-produced Anti-Racist Framework and Active Bystander Train-the-Trainer programme – developed with Aston University and Mokita Training and Consultancy – have driven measurable change. Since 2022, disciplinary disparities have dropped by over 50%, Global Majority board representation has risen from 0% to 47% and belief in equal progression among Global Majority colleagues has increased by nearly 10%.

Over 400 staff have completed Active

Bystander training, with 94% reporting greater confidence in challenging racism and 88% noting improved team culture. The programme has also contributed to reduced bullying and harassment and better patient experience.

Our approach has influenced regional policy through the Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board and has been adopted by neighbouring NHS trusts.

Deputy Chief Executive Patrick Nyarumbu MBE said the shortlisting reflects the dedication of the EDI team, Race Equity Network and colleagues across the Trust working to create an inclusive environment.

HSJ Editor Alastair McLellan praised all finalists, noting the growing impact of the awards on staff culture and morale across the NHS.



# We are all standing together for Sexual Safety at BSMHFT

Sexual safety is everyone's right – and everyone's responsibility. That's why Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust is proud to launch its new Sexual Safety Policy, reinforcing our zero-tolerance approach to sexual misconduct across the Trust.

This policy applies to all colleagues, volunteers, students, contractors and visitors, and demonstrates our commitment to the NHS Sexual Safety Charter. Every one of us has a role to play in creating a safe, respectful culture. We encourage all colleagues to read the policy, challenge inappropriate behaviour and share its importance with our teams.

## Why does this matter?

In 2023, a question on sexual safety was included in the NHS Staff Survey. The results showed that 8.67% of our staff reported unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature from patients, service users, their relatives or other members of the public and 3.84% from their colleagues. Nationally, the 2023/24 NHS staff survey revealed that one in eight NHS workers – around 58,000 people – had experienced unwanted sexual behaviour, and one in 26 had experienced similar harassment from a work colleague. These figures highlight the urgent need for action and support.

The NHS Staff Survey revealed that unwanted sexual behaviour is still a reality for too many people working in healthcare. Nationally, one in eight NHS workers reported experiencing unwanted sexual behaviour and one in 26 said it came from a colleague.

Our new policy and charter are designed to address these issues head-on, ensuring that anyone affected feels confident to speak up,

knowing they will be listened to, supported, and that action will be taken.

The Sexual Safety Charter sets out 10 core principles, including eradicating sexual harassment and abuse, promoting openness and transparency, supporting those affected and ensuring clear policies, training, and reporting mechanisms are in place. We are committed to these principles and to fostering a culture where inappropriate behaviour is never tolerated.



**NOT**  
**"IT'S ONLY A JOKE"**

**Misogyny, sexism or inappropriate sexual behaviour of any kind will not be tolerated here.**

Scan here to report:

## For staff

If you experience or witness sexual misconduct, you can report concerns confidentially via Eclipse, your People Partner, or a Freedom to Speak Up Guardian. Training is available to help everyone recognise and challenge inappropriate behaviour, and resources are provided to support affected colleagues.

Let's stand together to make our Trust a place where everyone feels safe, respected, and

valued. Show your support for the campaign by downloading and displaying the Sexual Safety Teams background.

**If you're a member of staff, scan the QR code on the images, to find out more. Scan QR code for NHS England's Sexual Misconduct Policy.**



## Triple success at national psychiatry awards

BSMHFT is celebrating a triple success at this year's Royal College of Psychiatrists (RCPsych) Awards, with three colleagues recognised for their exceptional contributions to mental health care, innovation and lived experience leadership.

Dr Rekha Lodhia, Expert by Experience at BSMHFT, was awarded Carer Contributor of the Year for her work championing compassionate, inclusive approaches to addressing culture-based inequalities in care. Also recognised was Dr Nudrat Rizvi, who received the Specialty Doctor/Associate Specialist (SAS) Doctor of the Year Award.

The RCPsych Presidential Award was presented to Professor Matthew Broome, a consultant in our east Birmingham Early Intervention in Psychosis service.

A Professor of Psychiatry and Youth

Mental Health at the University of Birmingham and Director of the Institute for Mental Health, Professor Broome's work bridges research, policy and clinical practice to improve outcomes for young people experiencing psychosis and mood-related difficulties.

BSMHFT's Medical Director, Dr Fabida Aria, congratulated all three recipients, saying:

"These awards reflect the incredible depth of expertise, compassion, lived experience leadership, and innovation that exists across our Trust. We are extremely proud of Rekha, Nudrat and Matthew - their work embodies our values and continues to shape better care for the communities we serve."

These achievements shine a spotlight on the dedication of colleagues across the system who work tirelessly to ensure mental health care is compassionate, equitable, evidence informed and driven by the voices of the people it serves.





# City's first 24/7 Neighbourhood Mental Health Centre

Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust (BSMHFT) is spearheading a major transformation in local mental health care with the development of the city's first dedicated 24/7 Neighbourhood Mental Health Centre (NMHC).

This pioneering initiative marks a significant shift from hospital-based treatment to round-the-clock, holistic community-led support.

The new centre - currently being redeveloped in partnership with the Ghamkol Sharif Charity at the former Ghamkol Sharif Education Centre (GSEC) in Small Heath - will be accessible for those aged 18 and over, living in the Bordsley Green, Heartlands and Small Heath areas.

Over the last 10 months, the service has been temporarily operating from the Omnia GP Practice, seven days per week between 8am to 8pm since the beginning of 2025. In just 10 months, more than 950 local people with a range of mental health support needs, have been supported by the team.

Expanding to a 24/7 day-and-night model will ensure that individuals can access safe, compassionate, person-centred support whenever they need it. This will be either in the community or from the centre, where they have the opportunity to spend some time in the short stay beds, for between one day and one week. It will also serve as a step-down facility for those

transitioning from inpatient wards back into the community.

For those unable to attend the centre in person, the 24/7 NMHC team will continue to deliver outreach support directly in people's homes or in other trusted community venues, ensuring no one is left without care.

Inspired by the internationally renowned Trieste Model, the 24/7 NMHC is aligned with NHS England's six core values underpinned by NHS England's 10 guiding principles. Operating an open-door policy, the NMHC removes barriers such as referrals and criteria thresholds, welcoming individuals as 'guests' rather than 'patients'.

This approach focuses on people's rights, choice, respect and inclusion.

By focusing on hospitality over hospitalisation, the service will continue to redefine mental health care, making it more inclusive, compassionate and effective for those who access it.

Vanessa Devlin, Executive Director of Operations at Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust, said:

"We are very grateful to NHS England for enabling us to have a dedicated neighbourhood centre so that we can provide 24/7 care to those with severe mental illness who are struggling.

"We are building on the success of the first nine months of this service which is already transforming the way mental health care



**Pictured from left to right: Mohammed Raoof (HB Birmingham Managing Director), Akilah Duffus (24/7 NMHC Programme Lead), Suhana Kauser (HB Birmingham Graduate Quantity Surveyor), Danielle Oum (Chair, NHS Birmingham and Solihull and NHS Black Country), David Carr (SSL Project Manager), Dr Selvaraj Vincent (24/7 NMHC Clinical Lead), Philip Gayle (BSMHFT Chair), Roisin Fallon-Williams (BSMHFT Chief Executive) and Malik Gul (GSEC Project Manager)**

is delivered in the east of Birmingham.

"Hundreds of local people have already had access to immediate mental health support, closer to home. Whether they are at home, in crisis, or need of a short stay at the centre the service is there for them at the times they need it most."

The new centre will feature six bedrooms, a

kitchen, a comfortable lounge area, a meditation/prayer room, a clinic room, a staff office, a dining area and a welcoming reception - all designed to meet full accessibility needs.

Work on the redevelopment of the GSEC - courtesy of contractors HB Birmingham - is expected to complete at the end of November 2025.



**Dr Gurmeash Kaur (left) and Dr Kiran Badesha (centre) accept their award**

## APNA prize for tackling health inequalities

We are delighted to share that the Onward, Active, Knowledge and Skills (OAKS) team has won first prize for their presentation at the Asian Professionals National Alliance (APNA) NHS Annual Conference.

Their award-winning presentation showcased a Quality Improvement project focused on tackling culture-based health inequalities in mental health settings. This innovative work emphasises the importance of culturally competent care and demonstrates how meaningful, practical changes can transform the experiences of patients and service users.

The project introduced a range of initiatives, including a digital resource to support staff in delivering culturally sensitive

care, a communication passport to enhance personalised care planning and specialised training to strengthen cultural understanding among mental health professionals. Together, these initiatives represent an important step towards building a more inclusive and responsive mental health service.

This recognition celebrates the collaborative effort and dedication of the entire project team. Congratulations to Dr Gurmeash Kaur, Dr Kiran Badesha, Dr Viba Pavan Kumar, Alyson Coupe, Heba Salem, Iman Hassan, Imad Farooq, Sunayna Bhatia, and Rekha Lodhia for their outstanding contribution to advancing equality in mental health care.

## A new smoke-free chapter in supporting recovery

On 1 September 2025, we officially became a smoke-free organisation, marking a significant step forward in promoting healthier environments for patients, staff and visitors.

The policy means smoking and tobacco use are no longer permitted anywhere on Trust premises, including outdoor areas and entrances. While smoking was first banned in 2016, limited use was allowed during the pandemic in some garden areas. This has now been fully withdrawn in line with NHS and government guidance.

The move reflects our commitment to tackling tobacco dependency, which disproportionately affects people with mental health conditions. Smoking rates in this group are over 50% higher than the general population, contributing to a reduced life expectancy of seven to 25 years.

To support patients, Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) must now be prescribed within 30 minutes of admission. Staff nurses and nurse associates can dispense up to three days' worth of NRT under the Patient Group Directive (PGD).

One service user recently shared his



inspiring journey of quitting smoking with support from the Tobacco Dependency Service. After smoking since the age of nine, he was referred to the team and given a starter vape kit. "It took away my cravings," he said. "I felt respected, not pressured. That made all the difference."

Since quitting, he's noticed major improvements in his wellbeing and is now working towards stopping vaping with NRT. "I'm 100% happy," he said. "If my story can motivate people, I'm honoured to share it."

He also voiced strong support for the smoke-free policy: "It makes people quit and can have a positive impact on their lives."

**For support or queries, contact:**  
[bsmhft.tobaccodependency@nhs.net](mailto:bsmhft.tobaccodependency@nhs.net)



# Recovery brings hope and healing

To mark Recovery Month in September, the Solihull Integrated Addictions Service (SIAS) shared two inspiring stories that highlight the strength, resilience and transformation of individuals overcoming addiction.

SIAS - jointly delivered by four partners including BSMHFT - provides vital support to Solihull residents facing drug and alcohol dependency.

One service user described how counselling and group sessions helped them overcome alcohol addiction. After a challenging journey, they are sober and deeply grateful for the support received.

*“They became a second family, with mutual respect and no judgement.”*

Another service user, Jonathan, bravely shared his experience of addiction and recovery. Once in denial about his alcohol use, Jonathan's turning point came after a hospitalisation and a stark diagnosis: “Your next drink may be your last.” That moment led him to SIAS.

Initially overwhelmed, Jonathan found it difficult to accept help - but soon embraced the support offered.

*“SIAS gave me purpose, energy, a second chance”*

Jonathan  
service user

“SIAS gave me purpose, energy, a second chance,” he said. “They became a second family, with mutual respect and no judgement.”

Jonathan's self-esteem and mental health improved and he began to smile and laugh again. Now focused on rebuilding his life, he hopes to give back and raise awareness about addiction, which he says remains a taboo subject.

“We lose too many people to addiction,” he said. “We should embrace the survivors on a continual recovery journey.”

A big thank you to our SIAS team, including support workers and volunteers.

If you are concerned about your own or someone else's alcohol or drug use, call 0121 301 4141 or visit our website to make a referral



Clare once again soars to success



There's no stopping BSMHFT's Clare Gratrix, who has once again leapt to victory at the British Masters Athletics Federation (BMAF) Championships in Derby.

Competing in the women's 45-49 age group, Autism Peer Support Worker, Clare claimed the high jump title for the fourth consecutive year. Earlier this year, she also took gold at the World Masters Indoor Athletics Championship, cementing her place among the sport's elite.

*“Being autistic helps me concentrate and learn techniques”*

Clare Gratrix

Clare's achievements are made even more remarkable by the sensory challenges she faces, due to her autism. While the noise and unpredictability of competition can be difficult, she credits her autism with helping her stay laser-focused and absorb technical skills quickly, giving her a unique edge in the sport.

“Being autistic helps me concentrate and learn techniques,” Clare says. “It's not always easy, but it's part of what makes me a better athlete.”

She encourages others to take up - or return to - a sport they love, reminding us that physical activity is one of the best ways to boost both mental and physical wellbeing.

Clare's story is a powerful reminder that with determination and the right support, we can all raise the bar.

# Remembering little lives lost in Baby Loss Awareness Week

Our Spiritual Care team arranged a candlelit vigil as part the national Wave of Light for Baby loss Awareness Week, which took place between 9 and 15 October.

On Wednesday 15 October at 7pm, the Spiritual Care team lit 54 candles in remembrance - each one honouring a baby whose name had been lovingly shared by BSMHFT staff. It was a quiet, heartfelt moment to recognise lives lost too soon.

During the ceremony each baby was held in thought as words of prayer and blessings were spoken, with their memory cherished in the gentle light of the candles. Photographs were taken of each baby's name alongside their commemorative candle and these have been given to the families of the babies.

The event served as a poignant reminder that each little life will be always loved and always remembered.



During the week our Maternal Mental Health Service (MMHS) offered support to staff and their family members who have experienced any kind of baby loss.

They were invited to our Uffculme Centre for conversation, support and to create a ribbon tree to honour and remember babies and children.

Our MMHS service is for women/birthing people who experience significant mental health

distress which is directly associated with their experiences of baby loss.

We can find out more about the MMHS by scanning the QR code or visiting our website: [www.bsmhft.nhs.uk](http://www.bsmhft.nhs.uk)





# Men's Mental Health Awareness Month



November was Men's Mental Health Awareness Month, a time for breaking the silence and stigma surrounding men's mental ill-health. While it does a great job of raising awareness of this issue it's something we need to focus on all year round.

Men are less likely to seek help for their mental health and many hide their struggles, even from their partners. Half of men have struggled with mental health, yet fewer than half seek help.

If you notice changes in the behaviour of the men in your life including poor sleep, neglecting personal care, avoiding social situations and social media, or expressing hopelessness, it could signal they are distressed

A simple conversation with a partner, friend or member of the family using the ALEC method could really help. This was developed by *R U Ok?* which is an Australian mental health initiative and helps us check in with someone we're concerned about.

November, a leading charity for men's health has adopted this framework to help address mental health issues, especially among men. Everyone has mental health issues at some point in their lives.

David Jones, Clinical Governance Facilitator spoke to us about his mental health in a special *Five Minutes With* feature. David shares his journey, insights on mental health and why meaningful conversations matter now more than ever.

He is an active member of BSMHFT's Men's Staff Network and a Mental Health First Aider.



*“Everyone has mental health issues at some point in their lives, often more than once”*

**David Jones**  
Clinical Governance Facilitator

He says: “Everyone has mental health issues at some point in their lives, often more than once.”

David is passionate about creating spaces for men to connect, share and support each other and we can read more about him by scanning the QR code or visiting:

[www.bsmhft.nhs.uk](http://www.bsmhft.nhs.uk)



## A.L.E.C – Four Steps to Help

### A – Ask

Start by asking how they're feeling. Mention any changes you've noticed and don't be afraid to ask twice.



### L – Listen

Give your full attention without judgement. You don't need to fix things - just show you care.



### E – Encourage Action

Suggest simple steps like better sleep, exercise or talking to someone they trust. If low mood lasts more than two weeks, encourage them to speak to a GP.



### C – Check In

Follow up with a call or message. It shows you care and helps you gauge progress.



Need urgent mental health help?

NHS  
111  
option 2



## A new way to personalise care

A new digital tool is now live across the Trust that is designed to help staff better understand and support the people in their care.

The 'About Me' Communication Passport is a single-page summary that captures what matters most to each service user - from how they prefer to communicate, to what helps them feel safe, respected and understood. It's now available on RiO, our electronic patient record system used by clinical teams to document and manage care.

Developed through a Quality Improvement (QI) project focused on tackling culture-based health inequalities, the passport quickly evolved into something broader. Co-produced with Experts by Experience (EbE), it offers a snapshot of the person behind the diagnosis - helping us deliver more personalised, compassionate care.

Rather than asking service users to repeat their story at every appointment, the passport brings together key information in one place. The first half pulls through demographic details already recorded in RiO, while the



second half is shaped through person-centred conversations with clinicians.

It's designed to be completed collaboratively, ideally during follow-up sessions or care reviews, and when the service user is not in crisis. It's not mandatory but recommended for use across all settings and staffing groups.

The About Me tab can now be found in the Care Planning folder on RiO. It's a small change with the potential to make a big difference, helping to build trust, improve continuity and ensure every service user feels seen, heard and valued.





# Business Support Manager and Charity Champion

## Tara Bacciochi



At BSMHFT, our charity Caring Minds helps us go above and beyond what the NHS can provide, funding everything from specialist equipment and furniture to additional patient activities, carer and staff wellbeing support and more. For this *Five Minutes With...* we're shining a spotlight on one of our Charity Champions, Tara Bacciochi, whose dedication and passion for making a difference continue to inspire colleagues across the Trust.

**Hi Tara, please could you start by telling us a little bit about yourself and what you do at Team BSMHFT?**

Hi I'm Tara Bacciochi, the Business Support Manager for the Dementia and Frailty Division at The Juniper Centre.

I manage a fantastic team of three reception staff and four committed ward administrators who play a vital role in supporting our services. Together, we ensure that our administrative and front-of-house operations run smoothly, helping to create a welcoming and efficient environment for service users, visitors and staff.

**What is it like day-to-day working at Juniper?**

As the Business Support Manager for the Dementia and Frailty Division, my role is all about keeping things running smoothly behind the scenes so our clinical teams can focus on



delivering high-quality care. My day-to-day duties include, overseeing administrative processes to ensure compliance, consistency and efficiency. Supporting the higher manager on site, helping to ensure that operational and strategic decisions are implemented smoothly.

Also, acting as another point of contact for staff queries and concerns and assisting with coordination across departments. Alongside this I liaise with all on site teams to maintain timely and effective communication across the centre, manage resources and supplies, making sure staff have what they need to deliver care without disruption. As well as, supporting service improvement initiatives – including the implementation of new systems and processes – empowering and supporting reception and ward admin teams, ensuring they're well-trained, confident and valued in their roles. I'm also acting as the Fire Response Coordinator during office hours, helping to ensure safety protocols are followed and the site remains secure.

I'm passionate about creating a supportive, well-organised environment that allows our teams to thrive and our service users to feel safe, respected and cared for.

**Alongside your main job, you also do a huge amount of fund raising for our Trust Charity, Caring Minds, can you tell us what drives you to do this?**

I choose to get involved in fundraising for our Dementia and Frailty Division – through Caring Minds – because I truly believe in the importance of going that extra mile to support our patients and staff.

While our clinical teams provide incredible care every day, fundraising allows us to enhance the environment and experiences we offer, whether that's through improved facilities, therapeutic activities, or small comforts that make a big difference to someone's day.



It's also a way to bring our teams together, boost morale and show our community how passionate we are about the work we do. Every pound raised helps us do something meaningful, whether it's creating a more welcoming space, supporting wellbeing initiatives, or funding resources that aren't always covered by standard budgets.

For me, fundraising is about making a positive impact, celebrating our values and giving back to a division that works tirelessly to support some of the most vulnerable people in our care.

Fundraising is a powerful way to make a difference beyond our clinical roles. All contributions to Caring Minds help us enhance the care environment and improve the wellbeing of our service users, staff and visitors.

**Can you tell us how the funds raised at Juniper have been able to support and benefit patients and colleagues?**

Some of the things we've been able to achieve through fundraising include beautiful prints and artwork in clinical rooms to create a calming and therapeutic atmosphere. Outdoor garden furniture for patients, staff and visitors to enjoy fresh air and peaceful moments together. Also, the development of a memorial garden, supported through Caring Minds, in honour of staff member we sadly lost, a tranquil space for reflection and remembrance that means a great deal to our team.

These enhancements help us foster a sense of dignity, connection and care across the centre. Fundraising is not just about money, it's about community, compassion and creating a space that feels safe, respectful and uplifting for everyone who walks through our doors.

**What do you do to improve your mental health and wellbeing?**

Working in a busy environment like the Juniper Centre means it's really important to take care of my own wellbeing, so I can support others effectively. I try to focus on small, consistent habits that help me stay balanced and positive.

Some things I do include, taking regular breaks during the day – even just stepping outside for a few minutes helps me reset. Staying organised, keeping on top of tasks and planning ahead reduces stress and helps me feel more in control. Connecting with my team and reaching out to people, a quick chat, a laugh, or checking in with someone can really lift your mood and help you past the dark times.

Getting involved in fundraising and creative projects gives me a sense of purpose and remind me why I love working in mental health care. Spending time outdoors, whether it's walking, gardening, or just sitting in the fresh air, nature is a great way to recharge. Also, practising gratitude, I try to reflect on the positives, even on challenging days.

Mental health is something we all have and looking after it doesn't have to be complicated – it's about finding what works for you and making it part of your routine.

**Past, present or future, what three people would you most want to sit down for a meal with?**

One of them would absolutely be my nan. She was such a strong, loving presence in my life and I'd give anything to have one more conversation with her. I'd love to hear her stories again, share what I've been up to and just enjoy her warmth and wisdom.

Secondly would be Sir David Attenborough, whose passion for the natural world and humanity is endlessly inspiring.

I would also like to meet a future version of myself – just to check in, see how things turned out and get a bit of wisdom or reassurance. I think it would be comforting and motivating to hear what I've learned and how I've grown.

**Tell us something that people might not know about you**

I'm actually quite an independent person and am quite capable of achieving things on my own, I don't let people tell me I can't. I redesigned my own bungalow, drew up the plans and collaborated with the builders to bring my vision to life. I don't tend to worry about things until they happen, unless of course it could impact my loved ones then I go to pieces.



**Describe yourself in three words:**  
Resourceful, Empathetic and Cheerful.



## What is EMDR?

Eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing (EMDR) involves using side to side eye movements or other forms of bilateral stimulation to access and reprocess traumatic memories.

It stimulates either side of the brain to help people access the subconscious mind and process what is stored in there and how it affects them.

Stimulation is through either making eye movements from side to side, listening to sounds in headphones that alternate from one ear to the other, or by tapping either side of the body.

EMDR aims to kick-start the natural healing process which replaces the negative or traumatic images or memories.

## How to access NHS Talking Therapies

You can self-refer into your local NHS Talking Therapies service or speak to your GP. There are four services that operate across Birmingham and Solihull. Whichever one you choose, you will receive the same high level of care.

### Birmingham Healthy Minds (Birmingham only)

www.bsmhft.nhs.uk/our-services/birmingham-healthy-minds



### Living Well Consortium (Birmingham and Solihull)

livingwellconsortium.com



### Forward Thinking Birmingham (for children and young people)

www.forwardthinkingbirmingham.nhs.uk/make-a-referral



### Coventry, Warwickshire and Solihull Talking Therapies (Solihull only)

www.talkingtherapies.covwarkpt.nhs.uk



# Talking Therapies was a cornerstone in my recovery

For people who think NHS talking therapies is 'just talking', Jo Kelly could tell you otherwise.

A mum of two, cancer survivor, stem cell transplant recipient and now a World Transplant Games gold medallist, Jo's journey has been nothing short of extraordinary. But behind the medals and milestones, Jo was struggling with her mental health. That's when she reached out to NHS Talking Therapies.

At the age of 22, Jo was diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma – a type of cancer that affects the lymphatic system. She was given a terminal diagnosis and underwent extensive chemotherapy treatment, until one day she received life-changing news: a stem cell donor match had been found in Germany.

The transplant was curative and Jo, a data engineer from Solihull, was able to focus on her recovery and start planning her future with husband, Pete.

When Jo was back to full health, the couple were keen to start a family and they were lucky enough to have two children – Phoebe and Dylan – though IVF.

Jo had also taken up track cycling after being inspired by the athletes competing in the London 2012 Olympics, which she watched avidly from her hospital bed. Her dedication led to her becoming two-time British Road Race Champion and secured her place on Team GB in the World Transplant Games in Germany earlier this year, where she brought home three medals – two golds and a silver – as well as breaking the world time trial record.

Life for Jo was worlds away from the bleak future she had faced at the age of 22 and yet she reached a point last year – 17 years after her initial terminal diagnosis – when she knew something wasn't right.

Jo, who recently celebrated her 40th birthday, said: "As any busy working parent will know, it's a juggle and life can feel overwhelming at points; but this felt different. I was struggling to focus – both at work and at home – and felt constantly overwhelmed. I wasn't enjoying the life I had fought so hard for. There came a turning point where I knew I

"I was struggling to focus – both at work and at home – and felt constantly overwhelmed. I wasn't enjoying the life I had fought so hard for. There came a turning point where I knew I couldn't cope on my own anymore."

Jo Kelly



Jo with her two children Phoebe and Dylan

couldn't cope on my own anymore."

Jo self-referred to her local NHS Talking Therapies service in Solihull, provided by Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust and was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Jo received a comprehensive psychotherapy known as eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing (EMDR) where she and her therapist worked through traumatic memories that had been affecting all areas of her life.

Jo said: "Although my story was a positive one – finding a stem cell donor, recovering from cancer and two successful rounds of IVF – I came to realise that I had gone through these life-changing experiences and then moved on to the next thing (work, family, sport) without really processing what had happened to me.

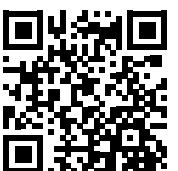
"EMDR helped me to revisit these memories

in a safe way – they're still there but don't feel harmful – they're no longer taking up space in my brain that I need to function."

Jo says that her mental health continues to be a work in progress, but credits NHS Talking Therapies as being a cornerstone in her recovery.

"I've got tools now to help me. I feel able to handle anything that comes at me and my family and being able to use these tools to keep my focus and stay positive was instrumental in my performance at the World Transplant Games this summer."

Watch Jo's story on YouTube:  
www.youtube.com/watch?v=hTJ89OGJZ18



Jo competing at the World Transplant Games 2025



Jo (centre) with fellow medal winners at the World Transplant Games 2025

**"Feeling anxious or depressed?"**

Antoinette  
NHS Talking Therapies Clinician

**NHS Talking Therapies can help**

I'm one of the many trained NHS clinicians here to help you with your mental health.

If you're struggling to cope with feelings of depression, excessive worry, social anxiety, post-traumatic stress or obsessions and compulsions, your GP can refer you or refer yourself at [nhs.uk/talk](https://nhs.uk/talk)

Mental health matters  
Help us help you



# Honouring our teams each month

Each month, we proudly highlight a remarkable team whose exceptional contributions set them apart. With more than 4,000 staff members working across 40+ sites, our organisation is filled with inspiring examples of drive, dedication and passion. The *Team of the Month* award is more than just recognition – it's our sincere appreciation for those who consistently embody our Trust Values and go the extra mile.

From clinical care to professional support, every team plays a vital role in delivering outstanding mental health services to our communities. Whether it's showing deep **Compassion**, championing **Inclusivity**,



or going the extra mile with unwavering **Commitment**, these teams are the heartbeat of our Trust. And now it's time to reveal our latest winners:



## August – Electroencephalography (EEG) team

The EEG team demonstrated outstanding compassion, dedication and quick decision-making when a patient became acutely unwell during a sleep study. The nurses went above and beyond by personally escorting the patient from Barberry to A&E, ensuring they received urgent care. Their professionalism, kindness and commitment to the patient's wellbeing left a lasting and deeply positive impact during a critical moment.

## September – HMP Healthcare

The HMP Healthcare team consistently demonstrate the Trust Values by delivering compassionate, person-centred care in a challenging environment, ensuring every patient/prisoner feels included and supported. They go above and beyond to overcome barriers, work collaboratively and support each other's development, making them a strong, values-driven team.



## June – Kennett Ward

The team provided dignified, heartfelt care to a terminally ill patient, going above and beyond despite limited external support. They ensured daily family visits and a smooth hospice transfer, prioritising the patient's emotional needs. The team also demonstrated resilience, empathy and unity while supporting each other and upholding Trust Values.



## July – Children and Young People transfer team

The Children and Young People transfer team won for their exceptional dedication and hard work in successfully delivering the safe transfer of colleagues to form our new Children and Young Person division. Their compassion, commitment and teamwork under intense pressure made this complex programme a success.

## Nominate your Team of the Month

If you're a member of Team BSMHFT, a service user, patient, carer, family member or one of our health partners, we'd love you to nominate the team that you feel has had a positive impact on you.

Just complete the short nomination form explaining why your chosen team should be worthy winners of the *Team of the Month* crown. This is available on the staff intranet BSMHFT Connect, social media channels or website:

[bsmhft.nhs.uk](https://bsmhft.nhs.uk) (see QR code).

**Nominations for Team of the Month close on the 15th day of each month. Any nominations received in the second half of the month will be included in the following month's awards.**



## Strengthening our culture of openness

This October, we celebrated Speak Up Week, focusing on the theme 'Follow Up'. The campaign highlighted the crucial role leaders and managers play in creating a safe, open environment where colleagues feel confident to raise concerns.

Throughout the week, Freedom to Speak Up (FTSU) Guardian Lucy Thomas (pictured second from left with colleagues) was available at the Uffculme Centre to meet with staff, answer questions and offer guidance on raising concerns or becoming an FTSU Champion. Her presence provided a valuable opportunity for colleagues to discuss issues in a supportive environment and learn more about the importance of follow-up

when concerns are raised.

A key highlight of the month was the Trust's first FTSU Champions Away Day, held at the Uffculme Centre on 31 October. Champions from across Team BSMHFT came together to share best practice, build confidence and strengthen support for colleagues. The event fostered new connections and reinforced the importance of championing openness and respect in every team.

By focusing on follow-up and accountability, Speak Up Week has helped reinforce a culture where concerns are not only heard but acted upon, making BSMHFT a safer, more supportive place for everyone.

As winter approaches, colder weather can bring extra risks – especially for older adults, people with long-term health conditions, disabilities or mental health challenges.

To best prepare for winter, here are our top tips to stay well and support those around us.



When a cold snap is forecast, keep living spaces heated to at least 18°C, dress in layers and move about regularly to stay warm. Closing bedroom windows and using draught excluders can help keep the chill out.



Annual flu and COVID-19 vaccinations are vital for topping up your protection. If you're unsure about eligibility, check with your GP or pharmacist. Don't delay treating minor illnesses – your local pharmacy can offer advice.



Make sure you have enough medication and order repeats early. If collecting prescriptions is difficult, ask someone you trust or see if your pharmacy offers free delivery.



Aim for at least one hot meal and several hot drinks daily. Foodbanks are available for those who need support. Carers can access advice and help from local organisations.

**For more information or feedback,**  
email: [bsmhft.winter.wellness@nhs.net](mailto:bsmhft.winter.wellness@nhs.net)



If you're struggling to keep your home warm, Age UK's Warm Homes programme and local Warm Welcome Spaces can help. For financial worries, Citizens Advice and National Debtline offer free support.



Falls can be more common in winter. If you feel unsteady, speak to your GP, who can refer you to falls prevention services. Social services in Birmingham and Solihull can assess care needs if you need extra help at home.



Stay connected with family, friends and neighbours and check on those who may be vulnerable. If you're feeling low or anxious, reach out to your GP, Birmingham Mind Helpline, or NHS 111 for support.



## 66 Feedback through the Friends and Family Test 99

We love to read the positive feedback that comes in through our Friends and Family Test (FFT) – it's a real reminder of the amazing care and support our teams provide every day.

The FFT gives service users, patients, carers, and families an easy way to share their experiences with us. It's not just about praise, it's also a vital tool that helps us learn, grow and keep improving as a Trust.

Here's some of the recent feedback:

### Psychiatric Decisions Unit

“I was listened to and helped with care and respect without any judgement. The nurses and doctors absolutely amazing.”

### Barberry – Vitivier

“Staff were lovely and attentive and they answered all my questions. The food was 10/10 – a good selection and it was delicious. The room was very clean and it was nice to have a television.”

### West Neighbourhood Mental Health Team

“My life has improved and my needs are being met and I feel listened too, my mum is also pleased I am getting the care I need. Please keep this service going as it is helping people like me. This is important as mental health is often overlooked in males especially gay men.”

### Birmingham Healthy Minds South (Talking Therapies)

“I definitely feel better for having attended the Wellbeing Workshop. It was informative and helpful. The group discussions assured me that I am not alone where my feelings are concerned. They gave me strategies to help me deal with my anxiety so I feel confident going forward. Thank you to all involved.”

### Forward Thinking Birmingham STICK Service - Early Help Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services

“Maria was very friendly, she gave great suggestions and it really helped me to not worry so much. Maria has really listened to my ideas and has used them to help me find ways not to worry.”

# Putting compassion and inclusion front and centre

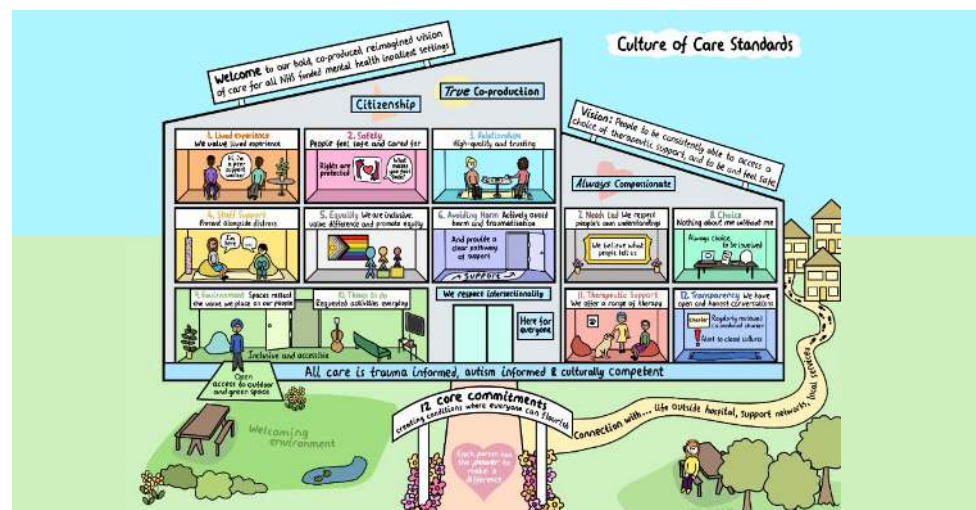
BSMHFT is proud to be part of a national movement transforming how care is delivered and experienced across England's mental health, learning disability and autism inpatient services.

The Culture of Care Programme – led by NHS England – is about more than improving services. It's about reshaping how care feels for everyone and connects national ambition with local action, helping staff and service users feel valued, safe and supported.

At its core are 12 co-produced Culture of Care Standards, develop in consultation with people who have lived experience, families, clinicians and staff. These define what compassionate, therapeutic care should look and feel like. The programme promotes care that is trauma-informed, autism-informed and anti-racist, ensuring every individual's experience and identity are understood and respected.

“We've moved from being a pilot site to a whole-Trust approach,” says Lisa Stalley-Green, Chief Nurse and Executive Sponsor for the programme. “The Culture of Care is about improving mental health and wellbeing for our local population in a trauma-informed and culturally sensitive way.”

BSMHFT launched its own Culture of Care Quality Improvement (QI) Programme earlier this year, beginning with pilot wards at Severn, George, Sage and Forward House. These early sites are leading the way in testing and shaping how Culture of Care is lived across the Trust.



Locally, teams have embraced the national model through listening exercises, co-production and staff wellbeing initiatives. From creating calming sensory gardens and art therapy boxes to introducing physical activity projects and inclusive spaces, small changes are already having a big impact.

“Culture of Care isn't just about improving services; it's about reshaping how we feel in our work,” adds Kuldeep Singh, Culture of Care Programme QI Lead. “When we start from care – quality, safety and compassion naturally follow.”

The Trust is now expanding the approach across all directorates, embedding compassionate

leadership and lived-experience collaboration into everyday practice. Regular sharing and learning events bring together staff, service users and carers to celebrate progress and spread good practice.

By aligning national vision with local action, BSMHFT is helping to shape a culture where everyone – staff, service users and families – feels cared for, connected and empowered.

For more information, please email  
kuldeep.singh4@nhs.net or bsmhft.qualityimprovementteam@nhs.net.

## Films serve as reminders of annual physical health check

A series of short ‘influencer style’ films have been produced by the BSMHFT Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Service (CMHWS), to break down barriers around annual physical health checks for those with severe mental illnesses (SMI).

Building on the success of the first campaign which was launched in 2023, the new videos focus on the experience of the service user and feature some of BSMHFT's wonderful Experts by Experience (EbE) who have all been diagnosed with a SMI.

Filmed locally on Kings Heath High Street, the films help to demystify what happens during a health check and answer some of the commonly asked questions surrounding the appointments. The campaign is supporting NHS England's national ambition to improve and increase the uptake of annual physical health checks for people living with a severe mental illness (SMI) especially those diagnosed with schizophrenia, psychosis, or bipolar disorder.

Alongside the EbE films, the campaign includes a video featuring award-winning physical health connector Medina Rahmen (South Birmingham Neighbourhood Mental Health Team) which explains the individual elements of a physical health check and



what people can expect when they attend their appointment.

Nicky Wadge, Clinical Service Manager for the Neighbourhood Mental Health Teams says: “We are delighted to have partnered with some amazing people this year to help drive awareness

of the importance of having an annual physical health check if you have been diagnosed with an SMI. Our service users are at the heart of everything we do and so to have them feature in this campaign is a powerful tool to help us to breakdown barriers for people who may otherwise have been feeling nervous about going for a health check.”

Look out for the new videos and posters across BSMHFT social media channels over the next few weeks. If you can't wait that long, scan the QR code which will take you to our web page where you can find more details, resources and all the videos for the campaign.

If you are aged 18 or over and you have been diagnosed with a severe mental illness (SMI), you will be invited to a physical health check every year at your GP surgery. A few simple tests can make a big difference to a person's overall health and wellbeing and will help to pick up any health problems early, so you can access the support you need to stay well.

SCAN FOR MORE  
INFORMATION





# Staff and Experts by Experience shape powerful new play 'After Sunday'

A moving new production, *After Sunday*, captured hearts and headlines thanks to the powerful collaboration between Coventry's Belgrade Theatre, BSMHFT staff and our Experts by Experience (EbE).

The play, which was also performed at London's Bush Theatre, told the story of three men in a secure hospital who find connection and hope through a Caribbean cooking group, led by their Occupational Therapist.

The script was shaped with direct input from EbEs from the Trust's Inpatient and FIRST community services, whose lived experiences brought authenticity, warmth and humanity to the characters. Their involvement ensured the play did not shy away from the challenges of secure care, while also highlighting the healing power of creativity, culture and shared experience.

Staff members including Katherine Allen, Mary Elliffe, Ellie Ashcroft and Nataalia Yasin played a central role in enabling this collaboration, supporting EbEs to share their stories with the production team.

One particularly memorable moment came when the creative team visited our Reaside

Clinic, to hear firsthand accounts about the cultural significance of Caribbean food and its role in recovery.

Reflecting on emotional impact of the performance, lead for recovery and experience Katherine Allen, who has worked in mental health for over 30 years, said:

"This was a highlight of my career. Our EbE script consultants ensured an authentic telling of life in secure care, bringing humanity and warmth to the characters without flinching from the challenges."

With live cooking on stage and post-show discussions, *After Sunday* offers a sensory and emotional journey that embodies the Trust's commitment to co-production and recovery through creativity.

One of the EbE script consultants, Marcus, said:

"I found the play very emotive, gripping, and real to my own experiences of mental health medium secure facilities."

"The positive energy, yet sadness in places, really hit home with the memories that it evoked within me. It has been a pleasure to be an integral part of *After Sunday*."



Nicola Young Photography

## Celebrating the power of group therapy

Healthcare professionals and service users came together for a full-day event titled "Everything you wanted to know about Groups – but were afraid to ask!" at the Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham.

Organised by Katherine Lucre, Consultant Psychotherapist and Project Lead for Compassionate Mind Training, the event celebrated the breadth and impact of group therapy within Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust.

A key aim of the day was to dispel the myth that group therapy is a 'second-class' form of treatment, highlighting instead its evidence-based effectiveness and the sense of shared understanding it can foster among participants.

Attendees explored a range of therapeutic models, shared lived experiences, and reflected on the value of working together in group settings.

The day began with an opening address by Chief Psychological Professions Officer Sunny Kalsy-Lillico, setting the tone for curiosity, compassion, and collaboration. This was followed by a powerful Lived Experience session led by Victoria Fewster and Sarah Theaker, who



shared first-hand accounts of the difference group therapy can make.

Participants then took part in a diverse programme of workshops and symposiums. Each session showcased the skill, creativity and dedication of teams across the Trust, while highlighting the ways in which group therapies support recovery, connection, and self-understanding.

The day concluded with a reflective session, leaving participants energised and inspired to continue promoting and developing group-based approaches across services.

Speaking after the event, organiser Katherine, said:

"It was incredibly heartening to hear from people who have experienced our therapies and wanted to come back and tell us how helpful they had been."

"This event is part of a wider Trust commitment to champion collaborative, compassionate care and strengthen the wellbeing of service users by providing the most appropriate and effective care. We hope this will be the first of many more events championing the benefits of group therapy."

## Recovery College

FOR ALL

### TAKES A PAUSE II

As our Recovery College approaches its 10th anniversary in 2026, the service is taking a thoughtful pause to reflect on its journey and plan for the future. Recovery College has played a vital role in supporting mental health recovery, offering courses and workshops that empower people to manage their wellbeing, build resilience, and connect with others.

This break will give staff, learners, families and carers the chance to share their experiences and ideas, ensuring the next chapter of Recovery College is shaped by the voices of those who know it best.

In the coming weeks, everyone who has engaged with Recovery College will be invited to contribute feedback and suggestions. Whether you've attended a course, supported a loved one, or worked alongside the team, your perspective is invaluable.

This period of reflection is about more than just looking back, it's about strengthening Recovery College's impact on mental health and wellbeing for years to come. Updates will be shared as plans develop, with opportunities to get involved.



# Marking Black History Month

Team BSMHFT marked Black History Month with two inspiring events celebrating culture, unity and equity.

The Tamarind Centre hosted a vibrant celebration bringing together staff, service users, and families. Guests began the day with a "Pin Your Country" activity, placing stickers on a world map to showcase the rich diversity within the community.

The event opened with a moving tribute to the late Dawn Sutherland, Advanced Nurse Practitioner for Carer and Engagement at Tamarind, who dedicated nearly three decades to the Trust and secure care. A spoken word performance and the poem "Black Love" set an empowering tone, followed by Aluya Ikhená's presentation on the Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework (PCREF), highlighting the importance of equity.

After a cultural catwalk showcased traditional attire, guests enjoyed Caribbean food, a themed cake and a collaborative newsletter. The day ended with a joyful limbo

contest, celebrating creativity, connection, and community.

The Race Equity Staff Network also hosted a Black History Month event at the Legacy Centre, creating an atmosphere of reflection and empowerment. The event featured an inspiring line-up of guest speakers.

Jacynth Ivey MBE, NHS Non-Executive Director, spoke on leadership, legacy, and valuing Black professionals in healthcare. Dr Martin Glynn, internationally renowned criminologist and educator, reflected on storytelling, identity, and the power of narratives to drive change and Angela Knight Jackson MBE, distinguished nurse and educator, shared insights on resilience, compassion, and paving the way for future generations.

Together, these events highlighted the importance of recognising and celebrating Black history, culture, and contributions within the Trust. Through cultural activities, reflections, and inspiring discussions, BSMHFT's Black History Month celebrations provided an opportunity to honour achievements, amplify diverse voices, and promote equity and inclusion across our community.



**BLACK  
HISTORY  
MONTH**

## Menopause and mental health

Menopause is a natural stage of life, but the changes it brings can affect both physical and mental health. Shifts in hormone levels during menopause and perimenopause often lead to symptoms such as anxiety, irritability, low mood, forgetfulness and poor concentration—sometimes described as "brain fog". Many women also experience sleep problems and lack of rest can make feelings of stress, sadness or difficulty concentrating even worse.

It's important to remember that life does not need to be put on hold because of menopause. There are many ways to manage symptoms and improve wellbeing. Healthy lifestyle choices, such as eating a balanced diet and exercising regularly can make a real difference. Activities like yoga, mindfulness and walking are simple, free options that can help you feel better. Taking time for yourself, whether it's enjoying a cup of tea,

reading a book, or spending time outdoors, can also provide valuable moments of calm.

If symptoms are affecting your daily life, support is available. Your GP can discuss treatment options and help you explore changes that suit your needs. Treatments may include hormone replacement therapy (HRT), cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), counselling, or mindfulness techniques. While some women are prescribed antidepressants, these are usually recommended only when depression is diagnosed. Menopause-related mood changes should not be confused with depression, which is a more persistent and serious condition. If you think you or someone close to you may be experiencing depression, speak to your GP as soon as possible.

The emotional impact of menopause is just as real as the physical changes. Loss of confidence or self-esteem can be challenging, especially when balancing work, family, and other responsibilities. Giving yourself time and space to adjust is essential. Remember, you are not alone and help is available.

By seeking support and making small, positive changes, you can manage symptoms and maintain your mental wellbeing throughout menopause and beyond.

Birmingham Healthy Minds is BSMHFT's talking therapies service and may be beneficial to you during the menopause. To access our service, you must be registered with a Birmingham GP. Scan the QR code to find your nearest service.





# Caring Minds



At BSMHFT, a positive experience can have a significant impact on a person's wellbeing and recovery. That's why Caring Minds, our official charity, funds those special extras that the NHS alone can't offer.

Whether it's improving patient environments or supporting wellbeing initiatives, every contribution enables us to do more for those who rely on our services.

To get involved with fundraising or to make a donation email:

✉ [bsmhft.fundraising@nhs.net](mailto:bsmhft.fundraising@nhs.net)

or visit:

🌐 [justgiving.com/caring-minds](https://justgiving.com/caring-minds)

Scan here  
to donate



## Caring Minds thanks donor for funding wellbeing space at Highcroft

Thanks to a generous £40,000 donation from Equitix to Caring Minds, a new wellbeing cabin 'The Highcroft Nook' has been created for colleagues at the Highcroft site, which officially opened in November.

This peaceful space offers a calm retreat to recharge during the working day. Equitix, a trusted BSMHFT partner, was joined by LRG (fit-out) and Care Display (artwork), with additional support from NHS Charities Together, who helped furnish the area.

Caring Minds is working to create more wellbeing spaces across the Trust, supported by NHS Charities Together. Limited funding is still available – contact the Caring Minds team to learn more.



## The latest lucky Caring Minds lottery winners

More lucky staff members have each won £250. Below are some of our recent winners, congratulations to all!

➔ **June: Claire Garside**, Personal Assistant at Summerhill Services Limited (SSL)

➔ **August: Samantha Rose**, Jasmine Suite Ward Manager

➔ **September: Martinez Rubio**, Information Analyst

If you are a permanent or fixed term BSMHFT staff member, you can join the Caring Minds lottery for as little as £1 a month. You can find out more information on Connect or contact the team: ✉ [bsmhft.fundraising@nhs.net](mailto:bsmhft.fundraising@nhs.net)

## Mental health supplier exhibition raises over £3,300

In September, the Uffculme Centre hosted a fantastic mental health supplier exhibition, organised by Martin Germaney (Senior Estates Manager) within Summer Hill Services Limited (SSL).

Thanks to the generosity of the exhibitors and attendees, the event raised over £3,300 for Caring Minds and Martin proudly presented a cheque to Charity Manager, Louise John. Suppliers specialising in the mental health environment came together to showcase innovations and outdoor display trucks gave everyone a chance to explore the latest technology up close.

The event was attended by SSL colleagues, members of the Integrated Care Board and Directors of Estates from across the NHS – all of whom praised the event's success and collaborative spirit.



## Our secure services get muddy for Caring Minds

This year, 14 staff from secure services – including nursing and psychology colleagues from Reaside, Tamarind and FIRST – completed the 10km Wolf Run obstacle course raising over £2,000 for Caring Minds.

The event was not only a fundraising success but also a valuable team-building experience, thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Funds raised for Caring Minds have enabled the purchase of new gym equipment, boosting service user participation and wellbeing and supported events that foster engagement, creativity and connection.





### Staff Charity Lottery

Entry from £1 per month  
1 draw per month  
£250 prize

Sign up through Connect





# SSL proudly sponsors Values Awards 2026

Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust (BSMHFT) and SSL have long worked side by side with a shared purpose to provide safe, supportive environments where service users can receive the best possible care.

This partnership, built on trust, collaboration and a shared commitment to providing the best care for their service users, is being celebrated this year as SSL once again proudly sponsors the annual BSMHFT Values Awards.

The Values Awards are one of the most anticipated events in the Trust's calendar, recognising colleagues who go above and beyond to live the Trust's values of Compassion, Inclusion, Commitment. From frontline staff to those working behind the scenes, the Awards shine a light on the individuals and teams who make a real difference every day.

SSL's sponsorship reflects the close relationship between the two organisations. Working hand in hand with the Trust, SSL provides essential services that help ensure the smooth running of BSMHFT sites across the region, from keeping buildings safe and clean, to creating welcoming spaces for services users and Trust colleagues alike.

"We're proud to sponsor this year's Values Awards," said Neil Hathaway, SSL's Operations Director. "Our partnership with BSMHFT

is about much more than service delivery, it's about supporting a shared mission. The dedication, compassion and professionalism demonstrated by Trust colleagues inspire us every day and we're proud to be a part of their celebrations."

The collaboration between SSL and BSMHFT is a true example of partnership in action. Whether it's ensuring estates and facilities are maintained to the highest standard or supporting new initiatives that enhance service user experience, both teams are united in their goal to create environments that enable recovery and wellbeing.

As this year's Values Awards bring together staff from across the Trust, SSL's sponsorship serves as a reminder that great care doesn't happen in isolation, it's the result of strong partnerships, shared purpose and a collective commitment to making a difference.

SSL's logo and branding will be prominently displayed on the evening as well as on all event literature, highlighting the strong connection between the two organisations, united for this inspiring event.



## Stay Connected with SSL on LinkedIn

SSL works closely with colleagues across BSMHFT to support and maintain all of the Trust's sites. Although much of our work happens behind the scenes, we value the strong partnership and work we undertake together.

As part of a wider piece to promote the work of SSL we will be sharing more information on our LinkedIn page over the coming months. This will include short

updates on projects, news and stories from our staff. It's also a place to highlight the collaborative work happening day-to-day with Trust colleagues.

If you'd like to stay connected and see more of what we do, please follow us:

[www.linkedin.com/company/ssl-summerhill-services-limited/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ssl-summerhill-services-limited/)



## AGM 2025 brings energy and connection

This year's Annual General Meeting was a vibrant celebration of progress, innovation and community.

Held in a packed Uffculme Centre, the event featured a dynamic transformation zone and a series of information stalls showcasing key priorities including digital innovation, community mental health services and equality, diversity and inclusion. The wellbeing zone was a highlight, offering yoga, seated exercises and a drum circle – led by Jane Jennings, Chekaine Steele and Maddy Parkes.

Guests were moved by an inspiring talk from award-winning mental health campaigner Sophia Badhan, who shared her lived experience with honesty and impact.

The formal AGM and Members' Meeting took place over lunch, followed by an engaging interactive workshop from Women and Theatre.

**We'd like to extend our thanks to all colleagues and partners who hosted stalls and to everyone who attended and contributed to the day's success.**

## 400 texters find 'space' to talk thanks to text support service

Over the summer, a new mental health text service launched across Birmingham and Solihull. By texting 'Space' to 85258, people of all ages can access a free, confidential, 24/7 service for mental health support.

Between August and October, the service held 500 conversations with more than 400 texters, with around 15 per cent of conversations coming from repeat texters.

The most common issues faced by texters are low mood, sadness, stress or worry, though the service, which is staffed by mental health professionals, has also supported people in crisis, with thoughts of suicide coming up in around 30 per cent of conversations.

Although the service is available to people of any age with a mobile phone, nearly half of all texters so far are aged between 14-24, a priority age group when it comes to improving mental health, as Carol McCauley, Senior Commissioning Manager for the Mental Health, Learning Disability and Autism Provider Collaborative explains.

Carol said: "Over the last five years – particularly since the Covid-19 pandemic – there has been a growing demand for mental health support for children and young people, and we know from feedback from people who use our services as well as the professionals providing them that things

"...the new text service is a really helpful and accessible tool for young people – and people of any age – to take that first step in talking about their mental health, particularly if they're not ready to speak about it in person or on the phone."

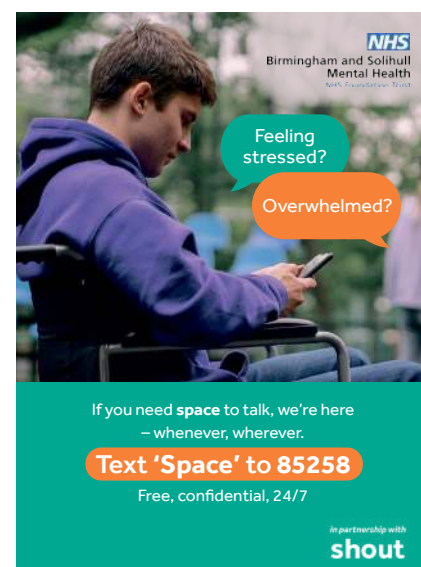
**Carol McCauley**

Senior Commissioning Manager for the Mental Health, Learning Disability and Autism Provider Collaborative

need to change if we are to meet this growing demand.

"Over the last 18 months we have been working with parents, carers, children, young people and professionals to develop a plan to improve the way we deliver mental health care for children and young people in Birmingham and Solihull, with a focus on improving access and wait times, early help and prevention.

"It will take some time to see this plan come to fruition, but the new text service is a really helpful and accessible tool for young people – and people of any age – to take that first step in talking about their mental health, particularly if they're not ready to speak about it in person or on the phone."



The current advertising campaign, which will run through to the end of November, promotes the service on Snapchat – a social media first for BSMHFT – as well as phonebooth kiosks and university accommodation screens.

For more information about the mental health text support service, visit our website or scan the QR code above:

[www.bsmhft.nhs.uk/service-users-and-carers/24-7-mental-health-text-service-for-birmingham-and-solihull/](https://www.bsmhft.nhs.uk/service-users-and-carers/24-7-mental-health-text-service-for-birmingham-and-solihull/)



 TrustTalk listening to you

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