

TRUST talk

NHS

East London
NHS Foundation Trust

TALKING THERAPIES

Therapist Femi talks
about helping young
black men reach out
for mental health
support

Winter 2025



**Digital
Edition**

**ELFT Staff
Awards 2024
Special Report
P5 - 8**

CEO FOREWORD

I am writing this column fresh from one of my favourite nights of the year – the ELFT Staff Awards.

The awards are a chance for all of us to take a moment to celebrate our collective achievements and it remains an absolute privilege to honour the hard work and dedication of individuals and teams.

For me, there is something truly special in seeing so many people across our services and geographies taking the time to put down on paper how much they appreciate and respect their colleagues. In my mind every single person nominated and every colleague who took the time to submit a nomination is a winner.

There is something special about the way we work in ELFT and take care of each other. I truly appreciate it because I also know the same time and care is taken when it comes to how we deliver our services.

Our work can be complex and people don't necessarily seek our help because things are going

well in their lives. They are worried about something that is having an impact on their quality of life and that for us is something that we carry. The way that colleagues in ELFT do that so skilfully just touches my heart every day.

I do hope you take a few minutes to read the interviews with some of our incredible winners in this edition.

The awards are a way to say thank you to all colleagues for your commitment and dedication. I know the NHS is facing some challenges that have an impact on you day to day.

I am always heartened when I see your amazing approach to dealing with the challenges by asking ourselves and others 'How could we do this in a different way? How do we work with our service users? How do we work with our partners?'

We've got a proven history of when we really work with our communities, when we work together well and we focus on the things that are important that we get results.

This is the time for us to really hone in on those and to ensure our values of care, respect and inclusivity continue to run through everything we do

Lorraine Sunduza OBE
Chief Executive



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"The importance of our work to connect with young black men"

Therapist Femi Agbebi talks about work by Newham Talking Therapies to help young black men in the borough reach out for mental health support.

Why has Newham Talking Therapies (NTT) launched a campaign to support young black men in Newham?

We recognised that for young black men reaching out to mental health services can be such a difficult step to make. We started this campaign to make ourselves more visible to young black men in Newham, to tell them 'We're here! To listen and to talk'.

What different approaches is the service testing?

We've tested out engaging local gyms and barbers' shops with merchandise and leaflets with information about our service. We've been working closely with the University of East London to set up a mental health stall during their fresher's week, and to host mental health workshops. We created a billboard artwork and advertised it at Westfield Stratford City shopping centre.

What has been the response to the digital poster at Westfield Stratford City shopping centre?

It has been brilliant both by people from the community and staff within the trust. It's getting people talking about the topic.

How important is the campaign to you?

As a young black male, who is also a therapist, I've seen first hand how mental health is a tricky topic to talk about within my community. That's why I have a passion to take 'therapy' outside of the therapy room and into the community!

What would your message be to any young black men in Newham who might need help?

Asking for help is a sign of strength, resourcefulness, and confidence. Here at Newham Talking Therapies we're here to help.



READ
the full
article



READ
the full
interview

Helping staff & service users

with the cost of living

Susan Downing from the People Participation (PP) team discusses her work as Cost of Living Lead within the Trust.

What is your role?

I provide practical advice, tips, hacks and strategies to help people reduce how much they spend on household bills and other everyday living costs.

Who do you help?

This support is for people employed by or receiving support from ELFT. I also help local communities in the ELFT boroughs.

Why is support needed?

The aim of my Cost of Living role is to reduce impact on health caused by household budget stress especially in the face of spiralling costs.

Why is it important to you?

I bring lived experience to this role and know what it is like to not have enough money to live on and bring a wealth of cost saving tips and hacks I have used to make my money go further without compromising on my health and wellbeing.

What difference does the support make?

Making simple changes, utilising the wide range of easy and practical ways to cut costs that I suggest, can add up to a substantial and sustainable reduction in the cost of household bills and essentials..

What moments stand out for you from the work??

Winning Project of the Year for Cost of Living at the People Participation Awards in 2023 was an incredibly proud moment.

Circulating news of a free broadband contract offer on the day it was launched in Tower Hamlets. I promptly received a thank you email from someone who had read my tip, signed up and saved themselves 12 months of broadband bills. That moment has stuck with me because the feedback demonstrated the effectiveness my work can have.

What are your hopes for the next year?

I hope to continue building connections with local councils and community services.

ELFT STAFF AWARDS 2024

Celebrating our colleagues at ELFT Staff Awards 2024

More than 700 people attended ELFT's Staff Awards Ceremony and Party on 17 October, with more than 120 tuning into the live stream to follow all the action.

The awards are held to celebrate innovation, best practice and the outstanding contributions of individuals and services in providing person-centred care across Bedfordshire, Luton and east London.

The ceremony and celebration was started by the #ELFTin1Voice alongside the Sing Tower Hamlets choir, who gave an uplifting performance of "I'll be There" by the Four Tops. This was a medley of lyrics from the original soundtrack but also included new lines created in service user workshops across the Trust, representing their thoughts and voices, enabling them to be part of the event.

A gallery of images of staff in action was displayed above while they sang.



See p6-8 for interviews with some of our winners

ELFT STAFF AWARDS 2024

*Working to make sure
people's voices are heard*

The winner of the Because of You Award is Simon Bedeau, People Participation (PP) lead for Learning Disability Services.

Why do you do what you do?

I've always been passionate about working alongside people with learning disabilities. We know all too well about the health care inequalities people who have a learning disability face. The work we do together ensures people's voices are heard so that changes are made for more equitable care.

What is your most memorable moment working for the Trust?

Having worked in Learning Disabilities services for close to 14 years, I've been involved in a number of different projects. However, during the COVID pandemic, it was great the way colleagues within SPLD (Service for People who have a Learning Disability) in Bedfordshire quickly and proactively developed resources to help people and their carers understand COVID-19. This was done in a matter of days and changed as government guidance changed/became more available.

What can the NHS do better to support service users with Learning Disabilities?

We must continue to improve accessibility to our services. This is important for both clinical services and People Participation involvement. This would include 'easy read' or accessible information and considerations around physical access of venues etc.

People Participation
is about helping our service users and their carers to have a say in how we run the Trust. It is also about working together so that we can offer a better service for all.



"Amazing colleagues have helped with every step of my ELFT journey"

Social Worker Maryam Shafait from Luton and South Bedfordshire Crisis Resolution Home Treatment Team (CRHTT) received the Star of the Future Award. Maryam talks about the support of colleagues throughout her ELFT journey.

How does it feel to be a staff award winner?

It feels amazing to be appreciated. I felt incredibly proud and grateful to be recognised. There are so many professionals around the trust that do amazing work and equally, deserve to be recognised.

Where did your mental health career start?

I began my career in mental health services as a data entry clerk in 2008 while studying for my LLB in law.

After completing my law degree, I chose not to pursue a career in law. Instead, I joined the Trust bank where I faced challenges and opportunities that further diversified my skill set.

My manager recognized my potential, assigning me various administrative roles across the trust, which allowed me to gain valuable experience in different environments.

What were the next steps?

I was then offered a permanent position by East London NHS Foundation Trust (ELFT) working in reception at Charter House in Luton. Charter House felt like my second home, and I thrived there, building a work family that fuelled my desire to pursue a clinical career.

How did you become a social worker?

Determined to develop my career, I applied for a Master's in Social Work. I navigated my studies while juggling work and placements, which was challenging.

However, my resolve never wavered, largely thanks to the support from my incredible work family who believed in my path.

How have colleagues helped you at ELFT?

I'm incredibly grateful for the overwhelming support I've received throughout my Master's journey. Simple gestures, like a smile, a chat in the lift, or encouraging words, transformed my tough days into brighter ones.



**READ
the full
interview**

ELFT STAFF AWARDS 2024

*"Collaboration is key
in providing care"*

The Trust's Pathway Homeless Team, based at the Royal London Hospital, were winners of the Working in Collaboration Award. Dr Peter Buchman, Clinical Lead of the Pathway Homeless Team at the Royal London Hospital describes their work.

Who do you help?

Our team works with people experiencing, or at risk of homelessness who are admitted to the Royal London Hospital. We use a broad definition of homelessness including rough sleeping, sofa surfing, squatting as well as hostel dwellers and people in temporary accommodation such as Bed & Breakfast.

How do you help clients?

We are a multi-disciplinary team of committed compassionate professionals working with homeless patients in hospital to transform outcomes for their our patients through clinical advocacy. Our purpose is to improve the health of people experiencing homelessness and we aim to stop people returning to the street and increase vulnerable patients' engagement with community services to support their longer-term needs and stop them needing to come back to hospital.

How do you collaborate with services?

Most of our patients have multiple complex needs so collaboration is key. We hold a weekly multidisciplinary meeting to bring together colleagues from secondary care, local authority (housing, adult social care, and safeguarding), primary care, substance misuse services and voluntary sector.

What benefits does close partnership working bring?

Partnership working improves the lives and outcomes of the vulnerable people experiencing homelessness with whom we work.

How does it feel for the team to be recognised with a staff award?

It is a real boost to our team to be recognised in this way. We feel honoured being such a small team in a very big trust to win this award.



READ
the full
interview



READ
the full
interview

Preparing to launch **pilot** **mental health hub**

A new pilot scheme will be starting in the New Year to support the mental health needs of the community in Bethnal Green. Dr Judith Littlejohns, GP and Integrated Care Board (ICB) Clinical Lead for Adult Mental Health for Tower Hamlets, explains more.

What is the Barnsley Street Neighbourhood Mental Health Centre?

The Barnsley Street Neighbourhood Mental Health Centre is one of six pilot sites across England developing a mental health service which aims to offer relationship-focused continuity of care for a community of around 30,000-50,000 people. It will be open to residents who live within the local area from 8am to 8pm for booked appointments, unplanned walk-ins, one-to-one chats and therapeutic group activities.

What will the benefits be for residents?

The hope is that residents with mental health needs will be supported by a single local mental health team who will be able to get to know them well and help them co-produce their own person-centred care plan. This consistency of relationship is also hoped to reduce the need for multiple specialist referrals with their repeated assessments, and reduce the need for extensive risk assessment documentation.

What are the roles and responsibilities of partner organisations on the project?

The site is owned by local charity Look Ahead, who also run supported housing and other community services at the same location. Look Ahead will have staff present 24/7 to welcome people as they arrive, and for those staying in guest beds overnight.

ELFT will be providing the clinical staff, and the local authority will continue to provide the social workers who will remain embedded in the neighbourhood team.

Additional third sector organisations will continue to provide the community connectors and employment support, and hopefully use the group space to provide a range of therapeutic groups.

There is some primary care involvement in the planning group so far, and we see opportunities for more of this in the future. This is because the population served by the BSP will be the same catchment area as the local Primary Care Network.

Supporting LGBTQIA+ colleagues

Co-lead of the LGBTQIA+ Staff Network, Tiffer Hutchings, talks about the work and priorities for the network.

How did you first get involved with the LGBTQIA+ Network?

I got involved with the network in 2023 for London Pride when I marched with ELFT. The experience of being there with the NHS was profound, I knew then that I wanted to be a more active part of the network.

What steps is the network taking to ensure that intersectional identities are fully considered in LGBTQIA+ inclusion efforts within the Trust?

We are collaborating with the other staff networks by hosting an online Intersectionality Conference in the New Year that will provide a forum to reflect on the wealth of intersectional identities that ELFT hosts.

What achievement or initiative within the LGBTQIA+ network are you most proud of?

In our efforts to have a trauma informed approach as a key component of our strategy, the weekly safe space that we facilitate for our network members has been a real highlight.

What role do you think allies within the NHS play in supporting LGBTQIA+ inclusion?

Allies in the NHS play an essential role to support LGBTQIA+ inclusion, as demonstrated by the wonderful Richard Harwin who also leads the network. Advocacy from our allies in the workplace make queer staff members feel safer.

Looking ahead, what are some of the key priorities for the LGBTQIA+ network in the coming years?

Our key priority is recruiting directorate leads to represent the whole of ELFT. We are considering ways to offer more support for staff members who come to us with clinical scenarios where they want to offer better care for an LGBTQIA+ service user but are unsure how.



READ
the full
interview

Creating a sense of **belonging** & **identity**

Annabelle Lambourn, Intensive Support Team Manager, Tower Hamlets Learning Disabilities, Newham and Hackney, discusses her role as Race and Culture Equity (RaCE) Staff Network Lead.

Why does ELFT need the network?

It cultivates a space for staff to have a sense of belonging, a sense of identity. It also provides a space for us to come together, for staff to share lived experiences, to share their own narratives.

Who is it for?

The RaCE Network is for everyone and I really advocate that people should join the network as a source of coming together, sharing learning, cultivating and thinking about where we hold collaboration and co-production within that as well.

What changes within the Trust have been made because of the network?

We partner up with our other networks and there's an opportunity to hear from our leaders and our executive sponsorship in terms of how all the work within the network space feeds into the wider Trust organisation in terms of thinking around, 'What is the lessons learnt when we're talking about difficult, courageous conversations?' - especially around discrimination, harm and racism.

How does the Trust support you to balance your 'day job' and role as network lead?

I do have a four-day clinical role and I get really good supervision and mentorship from Edwin Ndlovu, who's our Executive Sponsor for the RaCE Network, the EDI space affords me a space to be able to bounce off ideas and also linking in with my other network leads as well.



WATCH
Annabelle's
video
interview

Helping Forensics Services help service users

Senior Forensic Social Worker at the Trust, Claire Holman, talks about the role of Forensic Services in providing support for those going through the criminal justice system or in need of specialist risk assessment and interventions.

Could you explain what the role of Forensic Services is?

Forensic Services work to support the recovery and wellbeing of people who have some risk or safety concerns relating to their mental health. My current role is as a Senior Social Worker and Social Supervisor in the East London Community Forensics Service (ELCFS).

How long have you been working in Forensic Services and at the Trust?

I worked as a Social Worker and an Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) in Hackney Community Mental Health Services for nearly 15 years before joining East London Forensic Service in 2021.

What made you want to start working in Forensic Services?

I chose to work in Forensic Services because of the many opportunities available for therapeutic rapport building with complex service users and their families and the opportunity to undertake lots of family work and group work.

Are there any key moments that have made you proud of the work you do?

I feel proud of my role and my team whenever a service user deals with a situation differently than they may have in the past, when they demonstrate the ability to deal with distress and conflict in a healthy, productive way rather than repeating patterns of past harmful behaviour.



READ
the full
interview

Bringing the People Promise to life

ELFT People Promise manager Annabelle Hall talks about her role.

What is your role with ELFT?

I'm the People Promise manager, which I started in June. This role came about as ELFT is part of the National People Promise Exemplar programme, my job is about communicating and bringing together activity within each of the seven elements of the People Promise.

What is the NHS People Promise?

It has seven elements from an overarching framework that creates an easily understood and standardised way of talking about, measuring, and improving people's experience.

How did it come about?

People Promise came from the 'looking after our people' section of the 2021/21 NHS People Plan. The annual NHS Staff Survey was then redesigned to align with this NHS People Promise from 2021.

What are they key elements of the NHS People Promise?

We are safe and healthy, we are always learning, we are compassionate and inclusive, we each have a voice that counts, we are recognised and rewarded, we work flexibly, we are a team.

How does the NHS People Promise support staff at ELFT?

The NHS People Promise is all about 'looking after our people'. If people are aware of the People Promise and what this means at ELFT, then they will be aware of the support that is there to help them in their roles.

How does the People Promise support service users?

If the People Promise supports staff, then it supports service users. When people feel like the People Promise is reflective of their experience and culture at work, it allows for the best care outcomes for our service users.

What are your next steps?

We've launched our People Promise Champion programme, any staff member who feels passionate about bringing the people promise to life will have that opportunity.



READ
the full
interview

Membership News



"Thank you and well done" is our message for this edition's members update.

Our governors are volunteers and with their help we continue to ensure that we provide a caring service to our population. We also have a separate volunteer team who complement and support the work that existing staff do across the Trust. They are all an invaluable source and we all grateful for their valuable experience and dedication to the NHS.

Our Chair Eileen is hosting a small thank you event at our head office in Alie Street in December for our volunteers who take time out of their day to make someone else's better – it is our way of saying thank you for their hard work throughout the year.

You may have seen that we held governor elections in the summer - thank you if found the time to vote or

nominate yourself, there was a lot of competition this year which was great to see.

Finding time to vote is appreciated, our governors are very grateful and looking forward to representing you. We would like to welcome our new governors that are continuing in their role and thank those that have completed their term. Governors have a statutory role here at the Trust, however, the time they give to represent you, they give for free.



READ more details about our elections

If you have any feedback our questions for Membership you can email us elft.membership@nhs.net

Banner Celebrating Women's Suffrage



A banner celebrating freedom, hope and championing women's rights has taken pride of place at Tower Hamlets Centre for Mental Health.

Service users helped create the vibrant banner in partnership with visual artist Claudette Johnson. It was made six years

ago to mark the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage and has now returned to be displayed.

In 2018, service users from the Tower Hamlets Centre for Mental Health joined a workshop with local resident and visual artist Claudette Johnson MBE RA to create a banner to mark the occasion. This event was held to share ideas and discuss values that were important to service users, including fairness, self-worth, freedom and hope.

The resulting banner featured a portrait of Olive Morris, a leading black British feminist and community leader from the 1970s.

This was later carried by Trust staff at a mass procession, creating a living artwork on the streets of London. Details about the processions – which were also held in Belfast, Cardiff and Edinburgh – can be found on art organisation Artichoke's website.

News in Pictures



VISIT our digital edition for details of all the great news stories below



National Award for ELFT Forensic Services



Celebrating International Recruitment



Awards for Estates Team



Living Wage Employer Accreditation



Pathways to Employment Event



Anti-Slavery Exhibition

Chair's Column

In October, the Boards of ELFT and NELFT came together to explore how we can not just survive but thrive during challenging times, and how to emerge with better quality and outcomes. Our focus was on how, as Boards, we can improve our practices to achieve this.

We agreed that maintaining a focus on what truly matters—delivering positive outcomes for the communities we serve and ensuring a positive experience for our staff—is crucial. Humility is key as we navigate these challenges, learning and adapting as we go. We also recognise the need for a clear vision of the future, while confronting the harsh realities with optimism.

We must reflect on our values and whether they need to evolve to remain relevant in these times. Above all, we must find ways to improve.

From this discussion, we outlined a roadmap to guide our work, with regular check-ins to ensure we're staying on course. Key focus areas include:

1. **Balancing Strategy and Operations** – We must

maintain focus on key priorities, even in the face of external pressures, and ensure operational issues are addressed effectively.

2. **Support and Challenge** – Challenge must always be constructive and delivered with care, remembering that both executives and non-executives share common goals.
3. **Curiosity vs Direction** – We must stay curious and open, but also be willing to provide clear direction when necessary, ensuring transparency and avoiding autocracy.
4. **Time and People** – In difficult times, investing in our people is vital, while also ensuring the processes that support them are not overlooked.

What stood out from our discussion is the importance of staying focused on our core purpose: serving our communities and supporting our staff. We must remain humble and avoid assuming we, as the Board, have all the answers. Difficult decisions must be made with our communities and staff at the heart of them. Now, more than ever, listening, clear communication, and leading with hope are essential.

Eileen Taylor



National Careers Service Spotlight

A counsellor from the Trust's Tower Hamlets Talking Therapies service has shared her story in a video for a national organisation to encourage others to follow the same career path.

Imtaz Khaliq was asked by the National Careers Service to discuss her career journey, and why she finds her role so rewarding, for the job profile section of the service's website.

She also talks about the day-to-day tasks involved in the job and the skills she needs to provide care.

"I feel it's a privilege to be able to be part of encouraging people into the field because counselling is helped by diversity to create equity so that it is place based and relevant," said Imtaz, who has worked for ELFT for five years and who joined the Tower Hamlets Talking Therapies team this summer.

Imtaz has been a lead group counsellor for the Trust,

for Counsellor Imtaz



WATCH
Imtaz's
video
interview

run counselling groups for two other London NHS trusts and is involved in a National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) trial comparing group arts therapies with group talking therapy. She has also been a peer tutor lead for the Tower Hamlets Recovery College.