# Your Voice Matters: People participation for people who experience disordered eating.

My name is Katharine Lazenby and I am an expert by experience and ELFT’s People Participation Worker for Disordered Eating.

East London NHS Foundation Trust has recognised an urgent need to increase and improve the support available for local people who struggle with disordered eating, and their carers. We are committed to ensuring that the changes we make and the initiatives we design are co-produced and co-delivered by people with lived experience. I have been working closely with service users and carers over the last two years to bring lived experience leadership and expertise to the development of East London’s disordered eating pathway within the Community Mental Health Transformation Programme, and to put the service user and carer’s voice at the heart of everything we do.

This involved, people with lived experience of disordered eating, assisting us to design our strategies for development. They have helped co-design and co-deliver psychoeducation sessions for local residents and co-produced training on eating disorders, which they also helped to deliver to NHS staff including GPs, Peer Support Workers, psychologists and psychiatrists.

People Participation offers many different opportunities for service users and carers to have a say in how the Trust is run - from sitting on interview panels to recruit new ELFT staff, to participating in focus groups or co-designing new service initiatives – we know that by working together we can offer better services for all.

Participants are paid in recognition of their time and supported to develop new skills and build confidence. Joining People Participation as a service user myself several years ago, helped me to find my voice and set me off on a path to finding my self-worth and a life beyond mental illness. Now I am passionate about supporting others to do the same.

If you are an ELFT service user or carer and would like to become part of the conversation about how we can improve support for people struggling with disordered eating, then please get in touch, I’d love to hear from you, because your voice matters.

Katharine Lazenby [Katharine.lazenby1@nhs.net](mailto:Katharine.lazenby1@nhs.net)