



East London
NHS Foundation Trust

EAST LONDON NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

10 Years of Providing Care & Support in Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire & Luton



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Introduction

The year marks the 10th anniversary of ELFT providing services across Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton and provides an opportunity to pause and reflect on the progress made in supporting those communities.

Our journey in improving care for the people we serve has been one of genuine partnership in Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes (BLMK).

Service users and carers have been involved from day one, sharing their insight and experience to help us shape services built around the needs of the individual.



Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) colleagues are embedded within our community mental health services, working side by side with mental health colleagues to provide a holistic approach and connect service users with wider

community support. Mind BLMK perform a vital role within our mental health crisis pathway.

Our mental health services and Bedfordshire Police work together to provide the help that people need through the Right Care, Right Person approach with frontline support including the long-standing mental health street triage team which also includes East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust (EEAST).

We provide BCHS in partnership with Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust and work closely with Bedford and Luton & Dunstable hospitals.

ELFT Chief Executive Lorraine Sunduza OBE is Health Inequalities Champion on the BLMK Integrated Care Board (ICB) and is helping implement the recommendations of The Denny Review: Health inequalities in Bedfordshire, Luton & Milton Keynes.

Integration and improved access to care have been developed with all of these partners and more.

All of our work has also been built on the foundations of ELFT's organisational treasures: people participation, quality improvement, our diversity and approach to inclusion, our kind and caring staff and our clinical leadership.

This document has been produced to highlight some of the strides we have made over the last decade through the stories of colleagues, service users and partners.

Reading their stories gives me an incredible sense of pride. It also fills me with confidence about how much more we can achieve together moving forward.

Eileen Taylor
Chair



Foreword

It is an absolute privilege for me to write this foreword and to mark 10 years of care in Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton by East London NHS Foundation Trust (ELFT).

In 2015 I was a volunteer with Healthwatch Luton and asked to be involved in the process to choose a new mental health provider. ELFT was chosen and I have been fortunate enough to be involved in the Trust's journey to improve care over the last decade.

I have worked with Trust colleagues, service users, carers and partner organisations throughout that time and have been an elected ELFT governor for eight years, first as a public governor for Luton and now as deputy lead governor.

My message is one of thanks.



I want to thank ELFT colleagues for their commitment, compassion and determination to help our communities.

I have seen first-hand the difference being made in Luton and Bedfordshire in reducing stigma around mental health and in providing services that meet the needs of the people.

We now have 24hr mental health crisis support available via NHS 111, and we have a perinatal mental health service supporting the needs of new parents and mums-to-be.

We have the fantastic Evergreen inpatient unit for children and young people, which is a dream come true because it provides care right here and avoids the need for those young people to travel to London or hundreds of miles away for specialist support.

I see collaboration and co-production present in every discussion about how to improve care and want to thank every service user, carer and partner for their contribution and insight.

The involvement of experts by experience, and the use of quality improvement, have been the foundations on which so much good work has been built.

When I talk to members of my community I feel an incredible sense of pride because people are now talking openly about their mental health, they are accessing services and they are recovering. These may sound obvious things but that has not always been the case and are the products of change, innovation and determination by so many wonderful people over 10 years.

When I am asked whether I made the right choice in helping choose ELFT to provide care my answer is always the same. I am proud we chose ELFT, proud of what we have achieved together and excited at what further progress we can achieve together moving forward.

Jamu Patel
ELFT Deputy Lead Governor



Executive Summary

This year marks 10 years of East London NHS Foundation Trust providing care to the communities of Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton.

We provide services to 730,000 people across the three local authority areas. Since 2015 we have provided a wide range of community and inpatient mental health services to children, young people, adults of working age and older adults. We are also a provider of substance misuse services in Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire.

Our Trust became the provider of Bedfordshire Community Health Services (BCHS) in 2018, a service delivered in partnership with Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust (CCS).

Mental health and community health teams operate from 54 community and inpatient sites across the county and the Trust's annual total income for BLMK is £177m.

Our mission is to improve quality of care for all, and our vision is to make a positive difference in people's lives by providing the highest quality mental health and community care to our local communities.

How we provide care and our priorities are defined through our five year strategy which takes into account the changing needs and strengths within our local populations, the impact of the pandemic on our communities, greater collaborative working between local health and social care organisations and the views of local people and stakeholders.





The ELFT 2021-2026 Strategy:

East London NHS Foundation Trust provides community health, mental health and primary care services to a population of around 1.8 million people across Bedfordshire, Luton, Richmond and East London. Our strategy takes into account the changing needs and assets within our local populations, the impact of the pandemic on our communities, greater collaborative working between local health and social care and voluntary sector organisations, and the views of local people, staff and stakeholders. It provides us with direction, and defines our priorities as an organisation.

Mission

What is our role in society

Strategic Outcomes

What are the biggest factors that will help us achieve our mission?

Specific Objectives

What do we need to work on, for each of our strategic outcomes, to achieve our mission?

To improve the quality of life for all we serve

Improved population health

- Prioritise children and young people's emotional, physical, social and learning development
- Support service users, carers and the communities we serve to develop skills & to access meaningful activity and good quality employment
- Support service users, carers and the communities we serve to achieve a healthy standard of living
- Contribute to the creation of healthy and sustainable places, including taking action on climate change
- Champion social justice, and fully commit to tackling racism and other forms of prejudice
- Prioritise prevention and early detection of illness in disadvantaged groups

Improved experience of care

- Address inequalities in experience, access and outcomes in our services
- Deliver on our commitment to integrated care, including multidisciplinary teams working around neighbourhoods
- Get the basics right through reducing waiting times and increasing access to services, meeting existing and new demand
- Continue to build our approach to coproduction, people participation and programmes such as peer support and befriending
- Build on the innovation that we saw during the pandemic to transform and improve our clinical delivery, strengthening our ability to adapt and remain flexible and resilient to future challenges and opportunities

Improved staff experience

- Develop and embed trauma-informed approaches into clinical practice and in our work with communities and partners
- Prioritise quality of care and develop our patient safety approach, applying quality improvement to all that we do
- Enhance our digital and data infrastructure so it works effectively in service of our teams
- Get the basics right through supporting our staff and teams to thrive and be happy and healthy, including work-life balance
- Develop and grow our workforce, offering lifelong learning, professional development and creating new and exciting opportunities for staff, service users, carers and local communities

Improved value

- Extend the financial viability programme, engaging all in reducing waste, improving financial and environmental sustainability
- Work collaboratively across the system with our partners to improve value and reduce waste



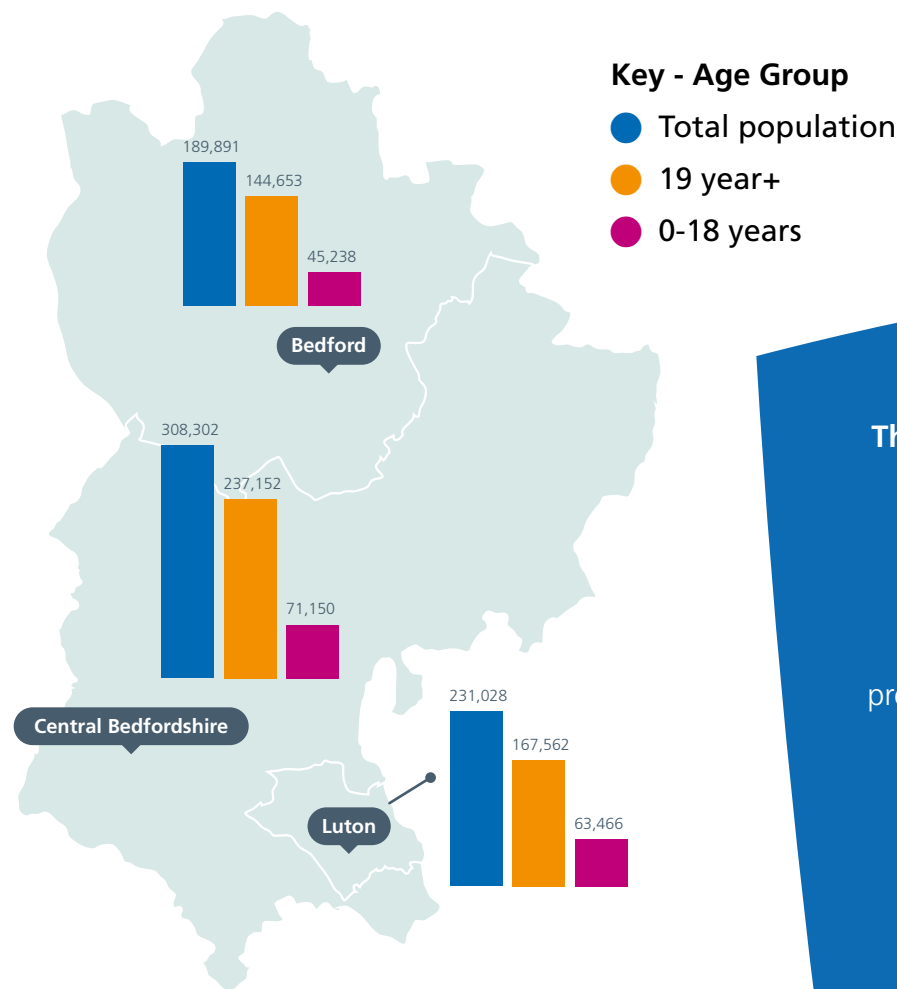


Our strengths as an organisation support us on our journey, including:

- People Participation (PP)
- Quality Improvement (QI)
- Our kind and caring staff
- Our diversity and approach to inclusion
- Our clinical leadership

We are an 'anchor organisation.' in that we stay in our location over time and have influence over our local communities. Working as an anchor organisation means we have a unique opportunity to improve the health of our communities through procurement, as an employer, through use of our land and buildings and by being environmentally sustainable. We aim to provide benefit to the local community as much as possible throughout our work as a Trust.

Bedfordshire and Luton population estimates mid 2023, ONS



The communities we serve

Luton is among the most culturally diverse parts of the country and also among the most deprived areas. Bedfordshire is a predominantly rural area with some of the most affluent communities in the country living alongside some of the most low income and deprived groups.



Commissioner Overview

As ELFT marks its 10th anniversary of providing care to communities across the county, Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board (BLMK ICB) Chief Executive Felicity Cox reflects on the Trust's work to improve the health and wellbeing of local people



BLMK ICB Chief Executive **Felicity Cox** has praised the commitment of ELFT to supporting communities across the county from 2015 to today.

Reflecting on a decade of the Trust providing care to communities across Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton, Felicity has shared a message of thanks to colleagues for their hard work and professionalism.

She has described ELFT as having led the way in integrating care, working with others and in developing new services to meet the needs of the population.

Examples highlighted by Felicity included the Trust establishing Bedfordshire Talking Therapies Service, work to support people in Luton experiencing homelessness and a partnership approach with local authority and GP services to manage the needs of the Afghan community when they first arrived in Bedfordshire.

She also emphasised how the Trust and Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust (CNWL), who provide mental health care in Milton Keynes, work closely together to relieve pressure in different parts of the system. They also worked together for the development of the Evergreen adolescent mental health unit and together ensured the voices of young people were front and centre in shaping the bespoke and innovative service.



ELFT has been at the forefront of the ICB's work on health inequalities, sharing its expertise on QI to help with their journey, added Felicity.

Lorraine Sunduza, ELFT's Chief Executive, is Health Inequalities Champion on the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and is helping implement the recommendations of The Denny Review: Health inequalities in Bedfordshire, Luton & Milton Keynes, which found that minority groups and populations did not feel heard or well-served by local health services.

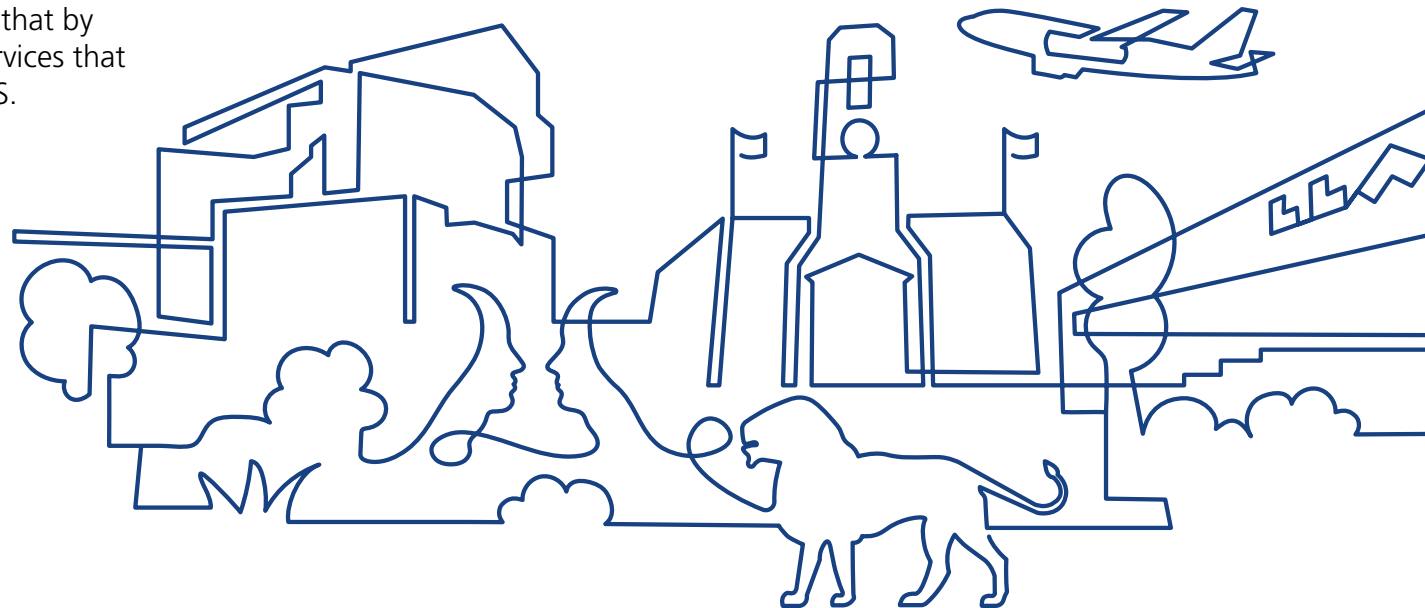
"Having Lorraine as the ICB Board Champion for Inequalities makes a real difference," said Felicity.

"It ensures that we hear the views of other providers, not just our own perceptions. Lorraine has met with many disadvantaged groups and builds that into the work that she does with us.

"ELFT is an exemplar of patient engagement and show that by listening to people who use services, you can design services that fit with their lives, and not around the needs of the NHS.

"Over the decade, ELFT have worked hard with us bringing unique ideas and spreading good practice. From day one, we were struck by how committed the Trust has been to our residents. And now it is 10 years!"

She added: "Thank you for all your endeavours, for sharing your experience so generously and for inspiring us. But most of all, thank you for being part of a vanguard focused on better health outcomes for our communities."





Integration across services, increasing access and improving experience and outcomes are among significant areas of progress in mental health care, says **BLMK mental health programme manager Michael Farrington.**

Michael has worked in the NHS for more than 20 years, managing 18 different mental health teams through ELFT and with previous providers before starting his current role leading the ICS Mental Health Programme seven years ago.

He has supported the implementation of the NHS London Term Plan for Mental Health, 2019-24.

One area of work has been increasing access to mental health support, from talking therapies, perinatal mental health and community mental health support to dementia diagnosis. This led to more than 20,000 people from BLMK receiving talking therapies support annually.

Michael also emphasised the ELFT culture and value placed on People Participation as a key driver in improving experience and outcomes. Co-production, outcome measures, surveys and events are now used regularly with a clear focus on improving people's experience of care. He sees the third area of significant progress as integration across services.

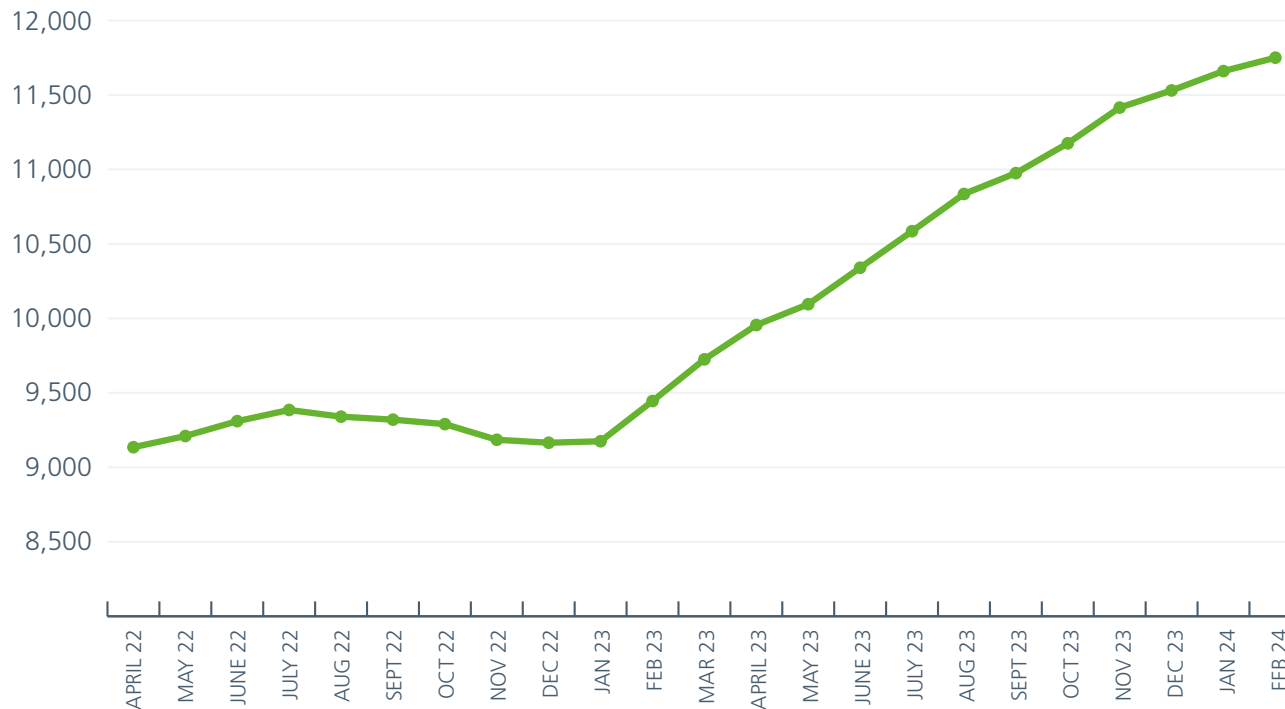
Examples include ELFT's partnership work with Mind BLMK, employer advisors from Waythrough working with Bedfordshire Talking Therapies, community mental health integration with VCSEs.

There is also long-term conditions support via talking therapies, work with acute partners to provide A&E mental health crisis support, close links with Bedfordshire Police with recent work including the Right Care, Right Person approach and links with public health around suicide prevention.

"We have come such a long way in terms of mental health access, reducing



Overall Access to Community Mental Health Services for Adults and Older Adults with Severe Mental Illnesses in BLMK



stigma and in parity of esteem,” said Michael.

“There is still a long way to go but we should take time to consider what has been achieved. The fact you can pick up a phone and get mental health crisis support 24hrs daily, 365 days a year, by calling NHS 111 is really significant.”

He added: “I want to say thank you to everyone at ELFT for their hard work, time, energy, commitment, passion and for making a real difference in people’s lives.”





Collaborative working between primary and secondary care mental health services has been one of the most important developments over the last 10 years, says [Dr Roshan Jayalath](#).

Dr Jayalath is a GP partner from Bedford and the strategic clinical lead for mental health, Learning Disabilities & Autism for BLMK ICB.

He and primary care colleagues are often the first point of contact for people with mental health issues.

“It is hugely important that we have easy access to mental health services,

and that the service users are able to have the right care at the right time by the right people,” he said.

Dr Jayalath emphasised the involvement of primary care services, secondary care services and VCSEs in the collaborative approach and highlighted the introduction of primary care link workers as a significant element in improving patient care.

Link workers are professionals in primary care networks (PCNs) and play a vital role in bridging the gap between primary care, secondary mental health services, and the community.

He also referenced the launch of additional mental health services, improved dementia diagnosis rates, and an increased focus on physical health checks for people with serious mental illness (SMI) as further examples of progress.

Dr Jayalath praised ELFT’s commitment to co-production and the contribution of service users and carers in sharing their lived experience to improve care and design new services.

“We have seen tremendous progress in mental health care over the last 10 years and I think it is important we celebrate that,” he said.

“As we mark 10 years of ELFT services in Bedfordshire and Luton, I want to sincerely thank all the staff members. Your resilience and dedication have been the foundation of this progress and to our service users and carers - your experiences, insights, and feedback have been instrumental in shaping our services.”



Our Approach

- » Leadership
- » People Participation
- » Quality Improvement
- » Research & Innovation
- » Workforce
- » Estates





Our Approach | Leadership



The commitment of the clinical leadership team to promote collaboration and opportunities for colleagues and service users to develop is one of the satisfying areas of progress for **Dr Angharad Ruttley, medical director for Bedfordshire and Luton.**

Angharad, who is a Consultant Liaison Psychiatrist, sees QI and research as key drivers in helping colleagues and service users grow.

QI tools and methodology are now ingrained across services in Bedfordshire and Luton, with the involvement of service users a fundamental part of the process.

"I would say it has taken 10 years of hard work and commitment by fantastic colleagues and QI methodology is now embedded across services and is used routinely," she said.

"Building that culture has been a long journey but it is so satisfying to see teams and services consistently use QI methodology to solve problems and improve services."

Angharad said one area of focus has been to reduce high vacancy rates, as they can impact service user experience and clinical outcomes.

The leadership team have worked hard to attract both new and experienced substantive consultant psychiatrists to Bedfordshire.

The ELFT Advanced Clinical Fellowship programme has also been launched, the specialist grade role has been introduced and training programmes for resident doctors have been expanded to achieve a sustainable pipeline of permanent doctors choosing to work in Bedfordshire.

"Our training programmes are now highly competitive and our higher trainees choose to stay with us as consultants, with our service users and carers as active participants in our recruitment processes," she added.

"This approach has reduced the previous high reliance on agency doctors and associated costs of agency use."

Angharad says the entire clinical leadership team promote a 'QI first' approach and also champion research opportunities.

Teams undertake collaborative work across organisational boundaries to improve the experience and outcomes for our service users. Examples include a joint addiction and liver clinic at Bedford Hospital, and a QI project across Luton community mental health team and ReSolutions addictions services.

Angharad also takes pride in how service users and colleagues embrace opportunities to grow. "It is an incredible privilege to work with service users and colleagues and watch them flourish, working as equals in continuously thinking of how we can improve care."



Building a culture of trust for staff, service users and carers has been one of the most meaningful achievements, says Michelle Bradley, director of Bedfordshire and Luton Mental Health and Wellbeing Services.

Michelle believes the approach has empowered teams to improve care and ensured service users and carers of all ages and backgrounds are now actively involved in designing the services they want to see.

Michelle, a former Learning Disabilities and Mental Health nurse who this year marks 40 years of working for the NHS, sees the executive leadership approach of giving services and service users space to work together as fundamental to progress made in Bedfordshire and Luton.

“I believe the Trust really listens to services and to service users, which fosters an environment where people are always striving to do better,” said Michelle.

“That is led by members of the executive who demonstrate the ELFT values of care, respect and inclusivity and who ensure we create spaces where people can talk about how care can grow and develop.

“A tremendous amount of time has been invested in building relationships over time and the benefits are a genuine sense of trust and the use of co-production in everything we do.” Michelle says the approach has paved the way for service development across community and inpatient services.

The Trust has developed its community mental health offer to include the Bedfordshire and

Luton Recovery College and The Lighthouse in Leighton Buzzard, while community mental health services have been redesigned to include a wider offer of health and social care support. The mental health crisis pathway has been developed to include mental health street triage (MHST), NHS 111 24hr mental health crisis support for all ages and the Recovery Lounge service provided in partnership with Mind BLMK.

Michelle highlighted the launch of new services including a county-wide perinatal mental health service and the integrated maternity and mental health service OCEAN (Offering Compassionate Emotional Support for those Living Through Birth Trauma & Birth Loss).

She also emphasised work to improve access and to address inequalities as significant areas of progress.

Michelle also ensures she personally ‘walks the journey’ with service users, connecting personally with individuals on a regular basis so she can understand how services are performing through the eyes of people receiving care.



"If you get to know people, listen and can really hear what they are saying then it makes a real difference," she added.

She finished by paying tribute to the work of ELFT colleagues across the county.

"I work with incredible people every day who are committed to providing the best care possible. They are amazing."



Staff wellbeing and development of workforce opportunities area are helping retain colleagues, says Michelle

She describes the wellbeing support as 'phenomenal' and praised staff initiatives such as the respect and dignity at work campaign which included the innovative 'Mile in my Shoes' experience, developed by the Empathy Museum, which invited staff to don a pair of shoes and a pair of headphones, and to walk listening to a recording of someone's story.

Development pathways have been developed, with one example being opportunities for admin colleagues to step into quality and performance.

Michelle also praised the annual ELFT Staff Awards programme, which celebrates excellent patient care and innovation.

"Some of the stories just blow you away," she said.

"The awards really matter and it gives me such a sense of pride to see colleagues from Bedfordshire and Luton step up on the stage to collect an award. It is just awesome."



The licence given to Bedfordshire Community Health Services (BCHS) colleagues to test ideas through a collaborative leadership approach and no blame culture stand out for associate director and Lead Nurse **Julia Mead**.

Julia, who celebrates 45 years of working for the NHS this summer, has experienced a range of management approaches over that time and says the ELFT executive team are different through the autonomy they give to her and BCHS colleagues, along with their clear focus on staff wellbeing.

“When we first joined ELFT we had some coaching around the approach promoted by the Trust and the facilitator summed it up perfectly – they described us as battery hens that had become free range!” she said.

“Initial responses were ‘we can do that?’ and ‘we can make those decisions?’ and that change in management approach with colleagues actively encouraged to try different approaches is now reflected in everything we do.”

The development of BCHS locality managers and seeing them grow as leaders through a structure of clearly defined support has been one highlight for Julia.

“My responsibilities have changed over time. While I no longer see patients in person and see them get well, I now get a different sense of joy in seeing colleagues flourish with the right support around them,” she added.

One important area of focus for the BCHS leadership team has been the retention of staff. As fewer people train as nurses nationally, BCHS has worked to focus on changes to keep experienced colleagues within community health services.

BCHS has developed a new competency, providing an alternative route for band 5 nurses to become band 6 community nurses. Historically, the only route for progression was to complete an intensive one-year specialist practitioner district nurse qualification at a Master’s level.

The service has now developed an alternative competency framework for that progression, based on practical requirements for the role. Staff feedback has also been instrumental in the development of a ‘skills and drills’ induction programme which sees all new starters complete mandatory training together before they begin work within their service, meaning they are fully equipped for their role and can hit the ground running.

“Some of our best ideas comes from our staff and I cannot emphasise enough how fortunate I feel to work alongside such an incredible group of people,” said Julia.



Our Approach | People Participation



Deputy head of People Participation (PP) Upma Monga believes her own journey as a mental health service user is testimony to the Trust's commitment to co-production.

Upma first became involved in PP in 2016 as a service user representative when under the care of Luton community mental health team. She describes the opportunity to have a voice in shaping care as transformative in her recovery journey and takes huge satisfaction from now being able to help others do the same.

Upma sees staff and service users work side-by-side as equals on a daily basis and believed the culture of co-production within Bedfordshire and Luton services has been fundamental in progress achieved across all services.

"Our shared objective is to enhance services through the power of lived experience," says Upma. "It is a privilege to see people grow in confidence through co-production and to listen as their voices are heard and influence meaningful service improvements."

Upma continues to be an ELFT service user and says her mental health has never been better as she embraces opportunities to grow through different PP roles. She was appointed as PP lead for Luton and established the Trust-wide Academy of Lived Experience (ALE) to embed lived experience into medical education before being appointed as deputy head of PP.

Upma is proud of how far the Trust, with unwavering support from the PP team, has travelled in embedding co-production. ELFT now has more than 200 jobs where lived experience is essential. "We have created a system where service users are not just involved - they are leading the way," she added.

"In Bedfordshire and Luton we have moved beyond traditional consultation models by embedding service users and carers into decision-making processes, ensuring their voices directly shape services and policies.

"Our service users are not just passive participants - they are leaders and equal partners in driving change."

Over 1,000 service users are involved in supporting the Trust through the following:

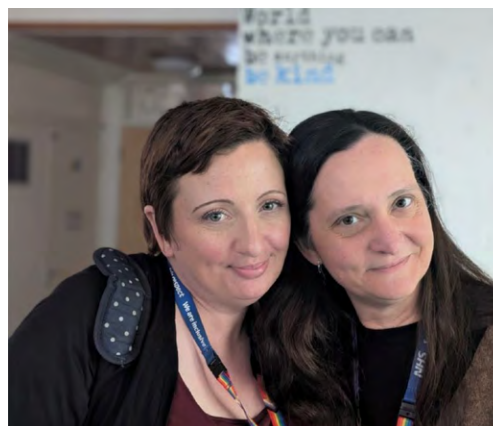
- Medical education
- ELFT befriending service
- Working Together Groups
- Service user representative on every interview panel
- Service user led accreditation programme
- QI programmes
- Digital coaches
- Accessibility ambassadors
- Guest lecturers
- Financial viability panel members
- Governors



Peer support training lead for the Trust
Lenna Adley is happy to share her personal mental health story and the role that PP has performed throughout her recovery journey.

The Lord Darzi Report independent investigation into the NHS in England highlights ELFT's People Participation as an exemplary model for the NHS:

"A good example is how East London Foundation Trust is working with the people it serves to be a Marmot Trust, seeking to tackle health inequalities in all it does. A strong voice for patients and local communities would promote more responsive services, while making it easier for the NHS to fulfil its promises to promote population health and to narrow health inequalities."



Lenna first met a PP lead while she was receiving care at one of the Trust's Bedfordshire and Luton inpatient services. A few months after discharge she became involved with PP activities for the first time and has never looked back.

Lenna has been involved in QI projects, spoken at conferences, taken part in interview panels, been involved in focus groups and given talks at the University of Bedfordshire.

She has also worked with 18–25-year-olds transitioning from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to adult services. Lenna shared her lived experience of making this daunting transition herself, helping to break down stigma and build rapport with these young people.

Lenna says her proudest achievement is her work with the University of Bedfordshire, helping the next generation of mental health nurses understand the service user perspective as part of their training.

"Honestly, I never thought I would be well enough to work," said Lenna. "The Trust offers the space to grow, for service users to build their confidence and to give people a voice."

"PP gave me the confidence to define what my recovery was like and QI gave me the tools to use in my recovery journey." She added: "Today, my mental health is the best it has ever been. It always amazes me that I am able to visit places like the Bedfordshire and Luton Recovery College, or Biggleswade community mental health team, and have the privilege of calling people who once supported me as my colleagues."

Lenna says the value the Trust puts into PP is what sets it apart from other mental health providers she has received care from.

"The biggest change we have seen in Bedfordshire and Luton is how ELFT gives service users and carers an active voice in deciding how care is delivered and received. That is what makes the Trust outstanding."



Our Approach | Quality Improvement



Embedding a culture of using QI tools and methodology to improve care and outcomes has been hugely important in driving progress, says public governor for Bedford Borough and service user **Felicity Stocker**.

Felicity was a member of the Bridging the Bedford Gap QI programme which received a national recognition after being named winner at the Positive Practice Mental Health Awards in 2018.

The project was launched to increase the awareness of service users on Willow and Ash ward at Oakley Court of what is available upon discharge from the Recovery College and PP.

The team believed if service users on the ward had access to information and experience of what is on offer from the Bedfordshire and Luton Recovery College that they may feel more prepared for discharge and likely to access services on discharge.

“Having the opportunity to test ideas and be creative, innovating with service users and ELFT colleagues, was a fantastic experience and the national recognition also made it really special,” said Felicity.

Felicity believes the use of QI is ingrained across services and its value is in providing a clear framework that provides opportunities to test ideas but is also structured and data led.

“I see QI as an enabler for staff and service users to work together, be creative and to make changes that help the system and the service user,” she added.





QI is a systematic and collaborative approach to making healthcare safer, more effective, patient-centered, timely, efficient, and equitable.

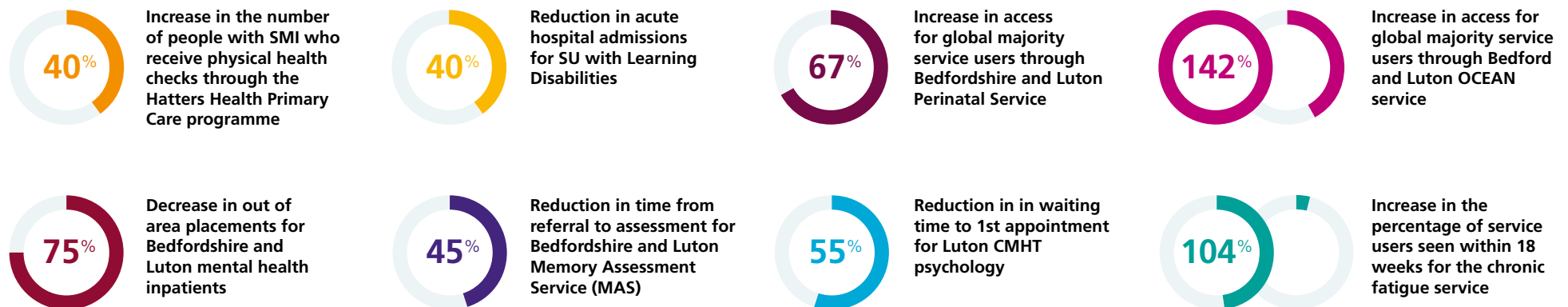
It involves using specific methods and tools to address problems and achieve measurable improvements within a healthcare setting. The core of quality improvement is a focus on outcomes, involving staff and service users in redesigning care delivery.

Since then, Bedfordshire and Luton have joined with London as part of Trust-wide cohorts. Service users in Bedfordshire and Luton have also developed a co-creators charter to help people understand how to authentically involve people with lived experience in QI.

People trained in Bedfordshire and Luton at ELFT in July 2025



QI projects in Bedfordshire and Luton





Our Approach | Research & Innovation



A commitment to collaborative research within Bedfordshire and Luton is helping further shape a culture of continuous improvement.

ELFT's mission is to improve the quality of life for all we serve.

Our vision for Research & Innovation (R&I) within the Trust – as part of a broad innovation portfolio, encompassing QI, service evaluations, trainees' degree projects, right up to externally funded research grant programmes – is to work together with, and in support of, our care services' objectives to continuously improve.



In 2023, ELFT and the University of Cambridge began a partnership to establish a new hub for health research in Bedfordshire and Luton to help improve patient care in primary and community healthcare services.

Dr Afia Ali, consultant psychiatrist in intellectual disability, and previously associate professor of psychiatry at UCL, joined mental health services at ELFT in Luton/Bedfordshire in 2022 as a clinical academic. She provided guidance and mentoring to the emerging research hub, supported by research active consultants (Dr. Kurt Buhagiar, Dr. Sen Kallumpuram and Dr Aneeba Anwar).

The hub aims to increase research capacity, embed a culture of collaborative research, and improve representation, as well as to foster integrated research across the traditional boundaries of physical and mental health care.

The hub carries out its research programmes working closely with healthcare staff in primary and community health and social care services in the area, and with the patients and carers of Bedfordshire and Luton. It also aims to bring new

academic opportunities to GPs and community healthcare professionals in the area, offering training and support to help them get started on their research journeys.

In 2024, we appointed Dr Shobhana (Shobi) Nagraj as the associate professor of community and primary care to lead this endeavour supported by her co-lead - Dr Afia Ali, with a view to foster research in the area of integrated mental/physical health care and population health.

Dr Nagraj is a clinical academic, with a background in implementation science and theory-informed design and evaluation of complex interventions. Her research focuses on developing innovative models of care for improving maternal child health across the life course. Shobi has worked extensively with grassroots organisations in low resource settings both globally and locally, to co-design interventions that meet the needs of communities, service-users, and the healthcare workforce.



“The research hub has raised the research profile at ELFT and promoted collaboration in Bedfordshire including constructing our own local priorities which have informed the development of the BLMK ICS research strategy ‘pillars’,” said Dr Angharad Ruttle, medical director for Bedfordshire and Luton.

During its past year, the hub has successfully brought together research-enthusiastic staff across the region with some notable successes including:

- A co-designed research engagement plan with established CYP (children and young people) social prescriber link workers and piloted ‘Research Champions’, who underwent bespoke CYP mental health training to engage with the diverse communities in Luton in CYP health
- A menopause and mental health pilot service funded by the BLMK ICS to raise awareness among both the workforce and service users, while improving clinical services for women in the premenopausal and menopausal stages of life
- The Bedfordshire and Luton memory team has now embarked on their first commercial trial ‘five-lives’ that is exploring the use of an app to boost brain health and improve cognition.



A pioneering research programme has been completed in Bedford to test the benefits of air cleaning units for service users and NHS staff in a mental health inpatient service.

The research is thought to be the first of its kind in a mental health inpatient unit studying the benefits of improved air quality for service users and staff. The project is an extension of a study led by Cambridge University Hospitals Foundation Trust which had seen similar testing take place for physical health inpatient wards at Addenbrooke’s Hospital in Cambridge.

The research at ELFT has been a joint programme involving clinical and estates teams.



ICONIC research programme

About 18 per cent of people with learning disability have behavioural problems such as being aggressive towards other people. Reasons include mental health problems and having a poor quality of life such as not having meaningful activities or friends. Behavioural problems can lead to the person being excluded from day services and having to leave their home if family and paid carers cannot cope with the behaviour. They may also be admitted to psychiatric hospital. There are psychological approaches that try to understand the cause of behaviour but only improve behaviour for short periods and don't appear to improve quality of life. One existing approach called DIALOG+, delivered by health professionals using a tablet, does improve quality of life in people with mental health problems, but it has not been used in people with learning disability.

The aim of the ICONIC research programme is to make DIALOG+ accessible and suitable for people with learning disability and to use it to help individuals think about things in their life they want to improve (e.g, leisure activities, accommodation) by using resources available to them or their carers. We aim to test if it improves quality of life and behaviour.



Celebrating research progress

On June 19 2025, colleagues from ELFT, University of Cambridge, BLMK ICB and community stakeholders gathered in person at Luton Library to celebrate nine months since the launch of the Bedfordshire and Luton Research Hub. The event brought together researchers and professionals from ELFT and the University of Cambridge to share progress, insights, and developments in implementation research taking place across Bedfordshire and Luton.





Our Approach | Workforce



Development of our workforce and a focus on staff wellbeing have been priorities in Bedfordshire and Luton.

Apprenticeships are helping the Trust recruit new staff and providing development opportunities for colleagues.

The programme offers internal and external candidates opportunities to gain the technical knowledge, practical skills and behaviours needed for their immediate job and future career.

With apprenticeships ranging from GCSE to Masters level, there is an apprenticeship suitable for every employee at ELFT. At present, we have 174 apprentices at the Trust, across 28 different apprenticeship programmes.

The apprenticeships offered include both clinical and non-clinical roles. BCHS podiatry apprentice Phoebe Edwards (pictured) received the prestigious Apprentice of the Year gold award at the Our Health Heroes Awards 2024, organised by Skills for Health.

As one of the first podiatry degree apprentices at ELFT and the University of East London, Phoebe, from Dunstable, had taken a lead on foot service casting clinic, alongside training staff members. Speaking after receiving her award, the former Queensbury Academy and Luton Sixth Form College student said: "It's just really humbling and really lovely to be recognised.

"I think it's great that the hard work over the

last four years throughout my apprenticeship has been recognised, and that I'm doing the right thing. I'm helping people and that's what I enjoy!"

Phoebe had also taken on the role of an ambassador for the podiatry profession and apprenticeships, spearheading an awareness campaign in collaboration with the Royal College of Podiatry and attending local schools and colleges.

Workforce and staff wellbeing work has also included:

- ELFT gaining accreditation as a Living Wage Employer. Gaining accreditation has been part of our work to get the basics right through supporting our staff and teams to thrive and be happy and healthy, including work-life balance.
- We continue to be one of the only Trusts to continue to provide vitamin D supplements to all staff during the winter months, if they wish. The programme was developed following initial requests from Race and Culture Equity (RaCE) staff network colleagues in 2020.



Reducing agency spend

Work to reduce agency spend has helped save money, improve stability and enhance workforce management.

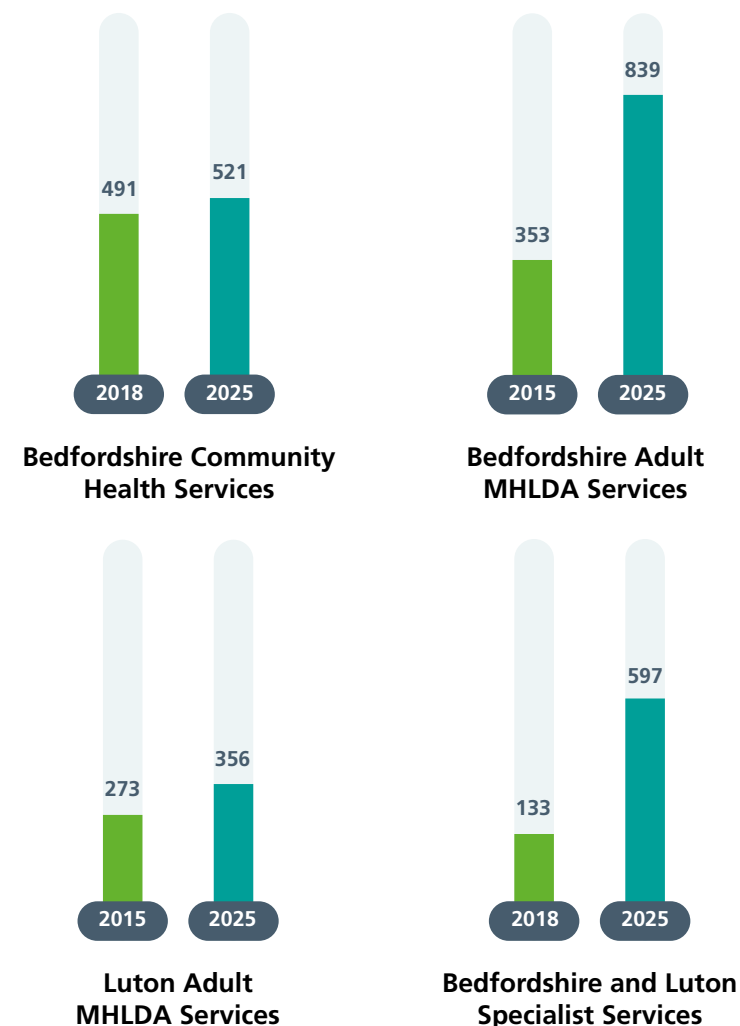
Through renegotiated contracts, limiting agency use for band and below, and converting long-term agency workers into permanent roles, we saved nearly £1m each month across the Trust during 2024 compared to the previous year. Some teams cut agency staffing from 5.3% to 3.2% of their total workforce. By reducing our reliance on agency staff and bringing in permanent nurses, we're also able to ensure continuity of care, which is crucial for our service users' recovery. BCHS took a practical, people-focused approach to reducing agency spend.

Work included converting agency staff to permanent roles, with long-term agency workers offered fixed-term or substantive posts, bringing stability to the team reducing costs.

Teams were supported to review caseloads and safely discharge patients who no longer needed input - ensuring resources were focused where they were most needed.

Open recruitment days and improved job adverts made it easier to attract candidates, while stronger staff engagement and development opportunities helped retain existing team members. Teams also worked to strengthen the staff bank, giving managers more flexibility and reducing the need to turn to agencies. The result has been a steady reduction in agency use and a more stable, motivated workforce.

Since 2015 our workforce in Bedfordshire and Luton has significantly increased





Our Approach | Estates

Work to improve the environment for service users and ELFT teams is led by the Trust's estates team.

They manage a network of 54 Trust sites across Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton.

The team have completed a series of successful mental health inpatient improvement programmes including the opening of the £17m Evergreen unit for adolescent mental health at the Luton & Dunstable University Hospital and the reopening of Oakley Court adult mental health inpatient service.

Nine extra bedrooms are also set to be added to our existing inpatient services this year.

Florence Ball House in Bedford and the Trust's section 136 suite have been refurbished and the team also completed the relocation of mental health inpatient services from the ageing Weller Wing site.

A crisis house is also planned and we have worked with partners to develop a proposal

for returning inpatient services to Bedford at Bedford Health Village, though have not yet been able to secure relevant funding approvals.

Community mental health programmes have included the £2m refurbishment of Charter House in Luton, refurbishment of Fountains Court in Bedford, creation of older people's hubs in Dunstable, refurbishment of Spring House in Biggleswade and the opening of a Luton site for Bedfordshire and Luton Recovery College.

ELFT mental health and community health services also operate from the Grove View, Dunstable's new £43m integrated health and care hub which opened in 2023.

Grove View brings together a broad range of services to support people's physical, social care and mental health need under one roof.

Grove View is a partnership project involving Central Bedfordshire Council, ELFT, Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, BLMK ICB and CCS.



The Trust's Estates, Facilities and Capital Development Team was named Estates & Facilities Team of the Year at the 2024 Design in Mental Health Awards.



Our Services



- » CAMHS
- » Talking Therapies
- » Adult Mental Health
- » Older Adults Mental Health
- » Learning Disabilities & Autism
- » Addictions Services
- » Community Health





Our Services | CAMHS



An ethos centred on community and continuity of care is the key strength of the Evergreen Tier 4 General Adolescent Unit, according to service manager **Valentine Dube.**

Prior to the opening of Evergreen, young people needing inpatient care were often transported across the region or even further away to access services. This sometimes resulted in delays in receiving appropriate care and support.

With Evergreen now operational, young people in need of inpatient care can receive treatment closer to home, their community, and their educational settings, improving both their experience and the quality of care they receive.

The service has developed a 'tethering' approach, helping young people stay connected to their local community during their stay. Evergreen's integrated care model ensures continuity, with a single virtual team collaborating across various settings and agencies to support the young person throughout their journey.

"I'm incredibly proud of how the Evergreen team, alongside other ELFT services and partners, work together in the best interests of each young person we support," said Valentine.

"Young people come to us at their most vulnerable, and being able to make a real difference in their lives is what makes this job so rewarding."

The CAMHS Tier 4 inpatient service opened in February 2023. It offers eight general adolescent

beds, providing specialist, short-term care for children and young people aged 13-17 with severe or complex mental health needs.

The service is available to young people from BLMK. Evergreen is part of the East of England Provider Collaborative, a partnership with other Tier 4 CAMHS units that ensures young people in the region can receive care locally, without the need to travel further afield for inpatient treatment.





In 2023/2024, Evergreen transferred seven young people from out-of-area beds.

Evergreen has consistently kept the number of BLMK young people admitted out of area to an all-time low, often at zero.

Evergreen admitted a total of 44 young people in 2023 and 2024, with 36 of them from BLMK.

In January 2024, the service hosted a visit from the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care.

Evergreen developed an eating disorder pathway and became one of the first General Adolescent Units (GAUs) in the East of England Provider Collaborative (EoEPC) to offer enteral feeding via nasogastric tube.

Evergreen has achieved the platinum level of ELFT Service User-Led Accreditation.

Evergreen won the ELFT Improving Service User Experience Award at the 2024 ELFT Staff Awards.





Community support for children and young people continues to adapt to the needs of service users, says **Lucy Pedrick the clinical team lead for the CAMHS Neurodevelopmental Team (North) and countywide Autism Assessment Pathway**.

Lucy has led a programme to change the approach to autism assessment for young people aged 13 and older across Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton.

The aim has been to implement neuro-affirming practice and adopt a standardised and consistent approach by ELFT and partners when working with autistic young people and their families. Neuro-affirming practice recognises and values the natural diversity of human brains and behaviours, rather than viewing differences as problems to be fixed. It focuses on individual needs and preferences while promoting acceptance and inclusion.

More than 150 staff across CAMHS have been trained in recognising and supporting autistic young people from a neuro-affirming

perspective, along with nearly 200 parents and carers.

The objective for the autism assessment pathway is to facilitate an assessment process which supports the individual by providing a clear and empathetic framework that engages the individual, provides useful information for them and helps them understand contemporary concepts of autism whilst exploring how those theories may apply to them.

“This has been a hugely important piece of work in changing how we assess and work with young people and making it a neuro affirming experience,” said Lucy.

“Autism is a difference, not a deficit, and this programme is about ensuring that we provide our young people with an assessment that reflects that; that is a positive and life-enhancing experience for all”.

The pathway has been in use since May 2024, following a seven-month planning, recruitment and training programme. From May, waiting lists have reduced from 22 months or more to approximately 16 months.



Routine Outcome Measures

The Bedfordshire and Luton CAMHS Service have been able to achieve high numbers of paired outcome measures by embedding the outcome process into routine practice.

Examples of how this has been achieved, and continues, are:

- Strong outcomes administration support
- Clinical outcomes leads
- Team outcomes champions
- Trust-wide CAMHS outcomes meetings to share challenges and ideas
- Focus on supporting clinicians to complete outcomes and change of culture
- Regular outcomes admin attendance at team meetings, engaging senior management/clinicians and trouble shooting
- Training for new starters part of induction
- Regular reminders to clinicians
- Time 2 measures required for discharge process to be completed.

Bedfordshire and Luton CAMHS referral to assessment waiting times

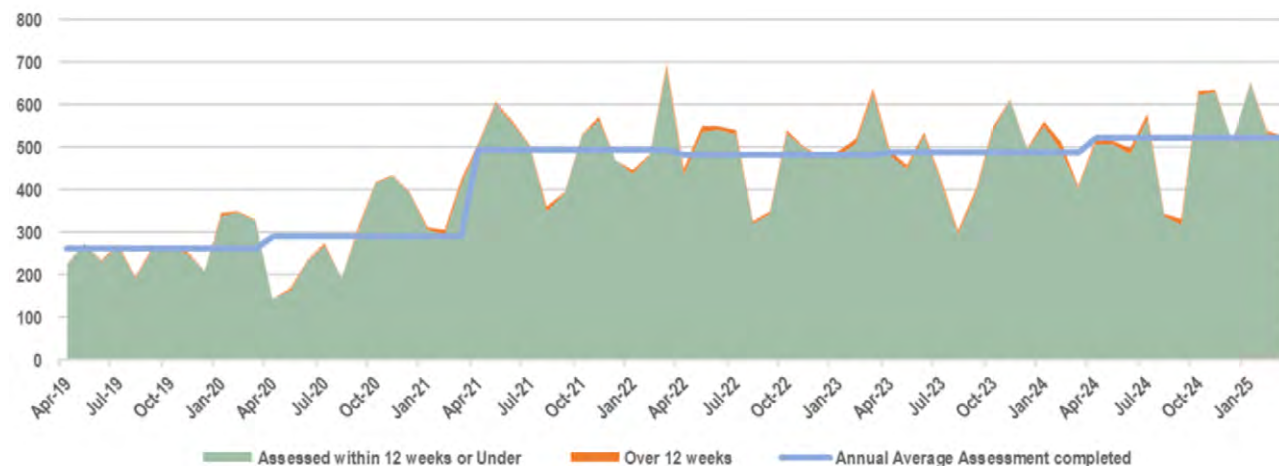


Chart shows number of assessments seen within 12 weeks or over 12 weeks over the last six years. Blue line shows annual average number of assessments completed and highlights the increase over time.



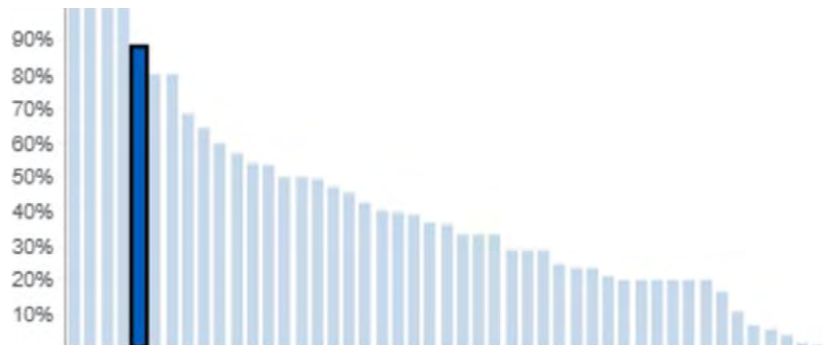


Assessment and Paired Scores

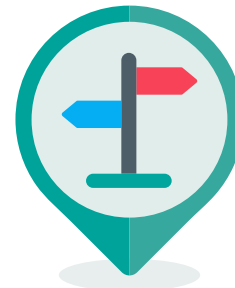
ELFT CAMHS services are in the top quartile for two contacts and assessment and two contacts and paired score in the East of England from benchmarking analysis of more than 90 trusts.

East of England (NHS Futures, MHSDS April 23 - October 24)

Proportion of closed referrals with at least 2 contacts and an assessment - benchmarking by Provider



Proportion of referrals with at least 2 contacts that have a paired score - benchmarking by Provider



Mental Health Support Teams

In 2017, the Government published its Green Paper for Transforming children and young people's mental health, which detailed proposals for expanding access to mental health care for children and young people, building on the national NHS transformation programme which was already underway.

The proposals were focused on providing additional support through schools and colleges and reducing waiting times for treatment by introducing Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) in education settings, jointly delivered with the Department for Education.

Between 2018- 2022, NHS England funded 14 pilot sites, some of which were in Bedfordshire and Luton.

Pilot sites worked with NHS England to build consensus on the approach to defining and measuring waiting times. We are thrilled to now have nine teams up and running in Bedfordshire and Luton with one training team in place and plans to recruit into further teams to achieve the government's national ambition to achieve 100 per cent coverage of MHSTs by 2030.



Our Services | Talking Therapies



Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) therapist and digital lead Hayley Stock believes teamwork and an approach of always asking 'where can we do better?' are key to the progress of Bedfordshire Talking Therapies.

Hayley has supported with, or been project lead, on a range of projects over the last 10 years as she embraced opportunities for professional development.

She started with the service as a trainee psychological wellbeing practitioner (PWP), qualified and became a senior PWP before training and qualifying as a CBT therapist. Hayley has spent the last 18 months working as CBT therapist and digital lead for Bedfordshire Talking Therapies.

As digital lead, Hayley leads on projects from automation and website development to exploring opportunities for service users, including the potential future use of AI. "I love this job because the team are always considering change and improvement. It doesn't stop – everyone has a shared aim of improving how we support service users and how we

support colleagues," says Hayley.

The encouragement provided is really important, as are the tools we used such as focus groups and QI.

Hayley believes the biggest improvements in care for Bedfordshire Talking Therapies clients over the years have been the reduction in waiting lists and steps forward in the quality of the service. "At one point, some step three CBT clients were waiting six months and in some cases up to a year," she says.

"Now we are looking at an average wait of three to four months for that support and a couple of weeks for our step two low intensity support. That is incredible progress."

When asked why she loves her job, Hayley's answer is simple.

"It is the people I work with," she says.

"I had a short stint somewhere else but returned because of the people here. There are always challenges but the drive within the team to move forward and change things for the better is out of this world."



The service's Reliable Improvement for clients during 2024/2025 was 72.7% - consistently higher than any other Talking Therapies service in England. This new key performance indicator (KPI) for Talking Therapies measures a statistically significant improvement in a person's mental health condition in their recovery journey.



Bedfordshire Talking Therapies

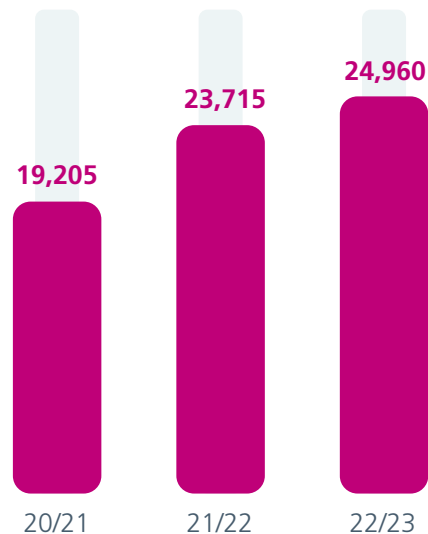
- About 3,000 patients open to the service at any given time.
- The service now offers employment support for any client that requires it and provides support for people with long-term conditions.
- The service has six live QI projects including improving recovery rates for 18-25 year olds and improving recovery rates for Asian males.
- The service has achieved platinum Service User-Led Accreditation.



Service User Feedback

“ This service has been so valuable for myself, it has let me explore what I’ve kept guarded for a long time. My therapists understood when I’ve needed more time to process especially if it was deep rooted. I’ve grown in myself since starting this process and will continue to do so. The therapists have been amazing. ”

BLMK Access to NHS Talking Therapies





Our Services | Adult Mental Health



Experienced Bedfordshire and Luton manager **Andy Rajkumar** has been involved in a range of work to develop mental health crisis and mental health inpatient support.

Andy is the borough lead nurse for Bedfordshire and Luton mental health inpatient services and has also worked as lead for the Trust's Luton & Dunstable Hospital crisis team, matron for the Jade Ward Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) and matron for Bedfordshire crisis

team. He has also been manager for the crisis and psychiatric liaison service (PLS) in Bedford, AMHP service manager and head of operations for the crisis pathway.

His insight into the different points of the mental health pathway has shaped an approach across inpatient services that focuses on quality and the needs of the service user. "We look at the person and their journey into mental health services," said Andy.

"Our focus is to connect care across community, crisis and inpatient care and look at the needs of someone as a whole – and not as a diagnosis."

Adult inpatient mental health teams have also working with learning disability and autism service colleagues to ensure reasonable adjustments are made for service users when needed.

Teams also hold a carers' forum and ward meetings with service users to identify theme or issues. Occupational therapists, psychologists and sports therapists are all involved in support on the wards and the introduction of pet therapy has been a popular addition for service users and staff.

Bedfordshire and Luton mental health services celebrated becoming the first inpatient unit to achieve service user-led accreditation for all their wards. All nine wards are now certified through the ELFT Service User-Led Accreditation programme after Crystal Ward achieved a silver award.



Bedfordshire and Luton mental health services are also involved a Trust-wide QI programme to improve observations and therapeutic engagement with service users.

There have been sustained improvements in observation completion, and several measures of violence and restrictive practice.

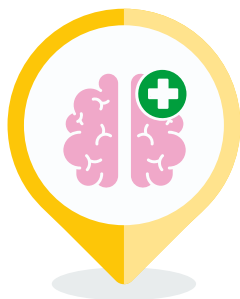


Another improvement has been the development of the 136 suite to provide a better environment for service users and with enhanced digital tools so people can be admitted to a virtual ward.

Andy says the focus on quality is also maintained through an approach of QI, Care Quality Commission (CQC) accreditation and by meeting the Quality Network for Inpatient Working Age Mental Health Services (QNWA) standard.

A close partnership approach with BLMK ICB, Healthwatch and service users via PP is also highly valued by the inpatient service. “I believe that everyone deserves the best care that they can receive,” says Andy.

“It only takes one aspect of your life to derail and you can end up needing a mental health service and we should all work on the basis it could be us or a loved one that needs support.”



Focus on increased support for carers has been one of the key areas of progress for the Bedfordshire and Luton Early Intervention Service (EIS), says Kerry Wilding.

Kerry was EIS team manager in 2015 and is now service lead and project lead for community mental health services across Bedfordshire and Luton.

She believes the relationships formed by EIS colleagues with carers is one of their strengths. The service works with people who are experiencing their first episode of psychosis.

“Because of what we do, our work is primarily with young people who are living at home with their parents,” said Kerry.

“We have developed an approach where we work very much with the whole family unit. It’s very much about supporting them to be able to support the individual as it is about us supporting the individual. Families as a whole feel very well held and supported by the team.”

The National Clinical Audit for Psychosis has also been a driver for progress. The team have recorded consistent improvements through the annual audit of the service and ratings against a number of standards. EIS is now rated as outstanding at level four, which is the highest rating available.

The rating reflects changes which included the team including physical health intervention through their work, carer focused education, helping service users access employment and education and enabling access to CBT for psychosis.

EIS remains a county-wide service and now operates from two bases, with one serving Luton and south Bedfordshire and the other serving Bedford and north Bedfordshire. Local bases have helped with recruitment and retention, as has EIS adopting a new approach of employing newly qualified mental health professionals into band 5 roles in the community.



“Historically, new recruits were required by employers to work in a ward environment before going into community roles,” said Kerry.

“We are taking a different approach and providing those new recruits with learning opportunities to progress and hopefully by the end of their first 12 month period be progressing to a Band 6 role. Our retention rate from going from people with a Band 5 into a band 6 has been very high and consequently we have very limited dependency on agency staff.”

Kerry has also seen significant change in mental health care through her work with community mental health teams and believes the integration of voluntary care sector colleagues has been something making a genuine difference to service users.

When asked why she does the job, Kerry answered: “I think that that people deserve a chance at recovery and living the best life that they possibly can. Everyone has one life and I see my job is helping people make the most of it.”



Supporting mums and helping them with their recovery journey is the reason [Katie McGlynn](#) loves her job with the Bedfordshire and Luton perinatal mental health team.

Clinical nurse specialist Katie was part of the original team of four who launched the service, the first of its kind in Bedfordshire and Luton, in 2019. It provides specialised care and support for women experiencing mental health challenges during pregnancy and after childbirth, up to two years postpartum.

The service has grown and developed a multi-disciplinary team (MDT) approach with the

core nursing team now joined by psychiatrists, a pharmacist, occupational therapists, psychologists, social workers, nursery nurses, support time recovery workers and peer support workers.

The expansion of the service has mirrored continued growth in demand for women with emerging mental health or diagnosed mental health conditions during pregnancy and after childbirth.

Katie says the team constantly work to understand the needs of service users and the diverse communities across Bedford borough, central Bedfordshire and Luton.

They run drop-in groups at children’s centres, host baby yoga sessions and provide a space for visitors to talk with a clinician at the same venue. They also partner with other organisations to help with issues including breastfeeding and run a Circle of Security group that focuses on the baby, family and family dynamics.

Katie, a mum of three, has been a nurse in Bedford for 30 years and was with Bedford CMHT when ELFT was commissioned to provide mental health services in 2015.



But she insists her current role is the most satisfying of her career. “This service didn’t exist before 2019 but our ever growing caseload is showing there are so many women out there who need our help,” she says.

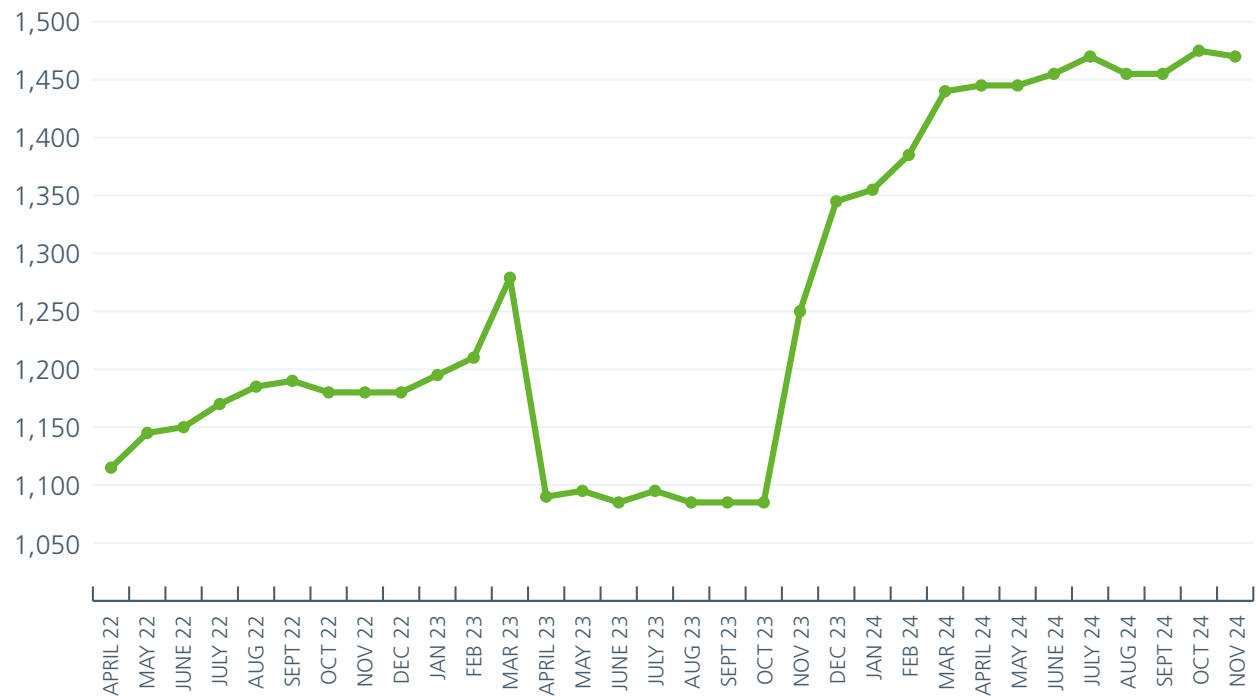
“In all of my 30 years this is the best role I have ever had. We have the privilege of seeing outcomes and watching these women go from strength to strength. Being able to see them grow and tell them ‘you are not a good mum, you are a great mum’ is one of the best things.

“I love my job.”

Accessing perinatal mental health in Bedfordshire and Luton.

In the last 12 months (January 2025), 1,440 women accessed specialist perinatal mental health services across Bedfordshire & Luton. This reflects sustained efforts by teams to increase awareness, referrals, and engagement in this critical pathway. These figures place Bedfordshire and Luton among the stronger performers in the east of England region, surpassing our target for the first time.

People accessing Perinatal Mental Health (PMH) services and Maternal Mental Health Services (MMHS) in BLMK





"If I can make a difference in somebody's day, then that makes a difference in mine." That is the ethos of **Karen Simpson**, one of the Trust's employment specialists supporting people who are open to community mental health teams and early intervention services.



The employment service has supported 811 individuals into paid employment since 2015.

Client Feedback

" I can't express how grateful I am for my mental health worker Karen. She has truly become one of the best people in my life. Karen's support has been invaluable in helping me rebuild my personality and regain my confidence.

Not only have Karen guided me through my emotional challenges, but they've also played a crucial role in my journey back to work. The encouragement and understanding have made all the difference, and I feel empowered to face my job with a renewed sense of purpose. Thank you for everything!



The Bedfordshire and Luton Individual Placement Support (IPS) team offer one-to-one tailored support to help people achieve their employment goals.

Employment specialists are based in localities across Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton.

Karen, who has been an employment specialist in the area with previous providers and with the Trust for the last 10 years, believes the biggest steps forward over the last decade have been the value placed on the IPS employment service internally and the development of connections with external partners across the county, in particular the DWP (Department of Work and Pensions).

"We are better known and better received by mental health colleagues," said Karen.

"That recognition of what we do, and greater understanding of how much difference employment makes in improving mental health and self-worth, have helped us connect with more colleagues and in turn help more service users.

"I'm passionate about what we do, and sharing an insight into our service and how we deliver it is always open to new staff in varied disciplines within the CMHTs."

Karen and colleagues are also always networking with partner organisations, such as Victim Support and the DWP, where their clients may



also be supported by ELFT community mental health services and open for referral or self-referral to the IPS services.

IPS provide one-to-one tailored support, offering assistance with CVs, job search and applications, benefits information, speculative and cover letters, interview techniques, interview role play and attendance. Additionally ongoing in-work support and contact employers on behalf of individual clients.

Karen says the work gives her a sense of contentment and satisfaction.

“It is an incredible privilege to support people and to watch them recover from a sense of hopelessness and grow,” she says.

“We are helping people to rebuild their self-worth, promote and gain an independence and deliver individual support plans tailored to their mental health and employment needs. We are with our service users every step of their journey back to work, or gaining their first place of employment.

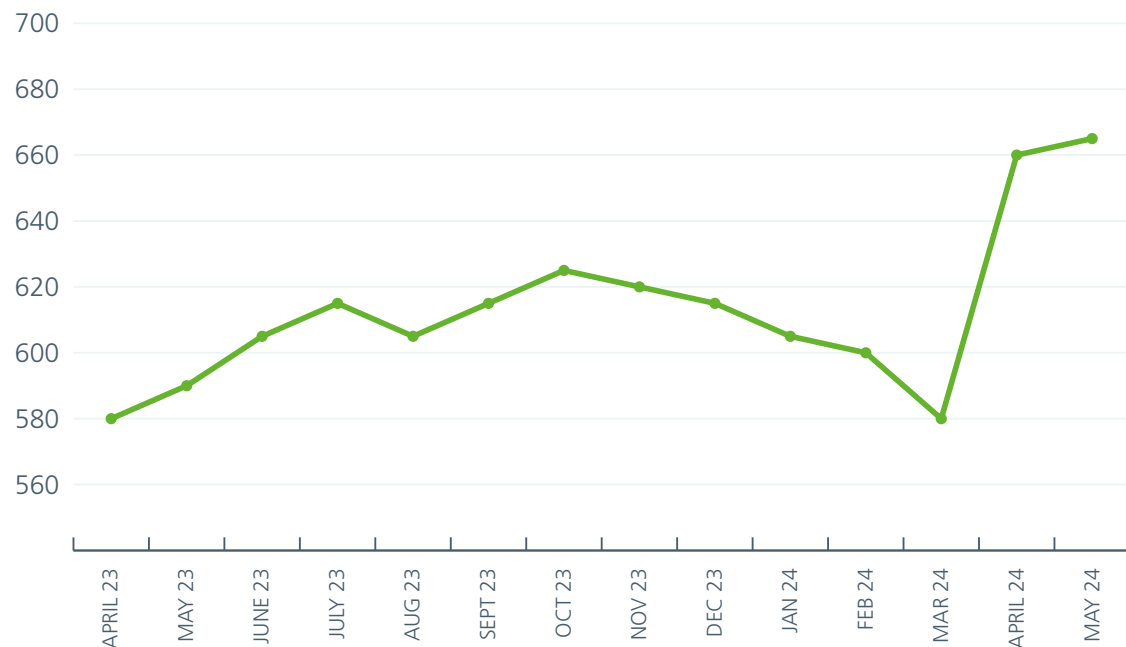
“We also support our younger service users very successfully into apprenticeships observing them gain a trade and progress into qualified positions.

“One of my service users is under the age of 25 and went from no work to working a 40 hour week in their apprenticeship. They are in their second year and have successfully met all targets set for their studies, never been late for work

and on their day off have come in to work when they were short-staffed. You feel nothing but pride to observe a person turn their life around and achieve.

“The biggest thing for me is always starting the process by reminding a client that they were given a name before they were given a mental health diagnosis. The first conversation is always ‘let’s talk about you’.”

Number of people accessing IPS in BLMK





The Trust works closely with Luton borough, central Bedfordshire and Bedford borough councils to provide integrated social care for adults and older people with mental health needs, says **Luton social care lead Jaikumar Shanmugasundaram**.

Jaikumar, also known as Jai to service users and colleagues, says social workers perform a vital role when services considering the needs of individuals, including benefits and housing. “We are a health and social care Trust and a holistic approach is incredibly important,” he said.

“We are looking at the person as a whole, rather than separating the mental health issue from the rest of their life.”

Social workers now perform leadership roles in MDTs and lead on all placement reviews and assessments.

Support for service users has also grown through the development of a tiered approach for social care, including social care support workers, qualified social workers carrying out assessments and reviews under legal and statutory duties and senior social work leads in leadership roles. Richard Fradgley, ELFT Director of Integrated Care and Deputy Chief Executive, is also a qualified social worker. ELFT is also one of the few NHS Trusts to have a Director of Social Work, evidencing the commitment of the trust to the profession.

Jai says he takes incredible pride at the value ELFT sees in social work within its services. Close partnership working with local authority colleagues is also helping improve care, with regular collaboration to discuss operational and strategic issues.

Jai was the first person appointed to the new social care lead role when it was created in Luton

and thrived in being given the opportunity to develop his own skills and shape the role. “The freedom I receive and the liberty to test new ideas has been incredible and helped me grow within the organisation,” he said.

“I love representing ELFT, increasing my knowledge and being challenged every day.”

- Since 2021 the Trust has had 35 newly qualified social workers complete their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) with the Trust, developing their skills, knowledge, and professional confidence.
- The Social Work Apprenticeship started in 2020 and 10 people successfully complete the apprenticeship and are now qualified social workers. Seven still remain employed within the Trust.
- Four colleagues are currently undertaking the social work apprenticeship.
- The Trust has had 23 Think Ahead students since 2016.



Our Services | Older Adults Mental Health



Maintaining dignity for older people living with dementia and reducing the burden on carers are the priorities for Marie Ansah-Johnson.

Marie is operational manager for the county-wide Bedfordshire dementia intensive support service (DISS) and the Bedfordshire older person's crisis resolution home treatment team (OP CRHT).

Her childhood experience is one factor why Marie is so passionate about supporting older people. She describes how, when young, she struggled to understand changes in her loving grandma after developing dementia, and how she recognised the symptoms described during her nursing training. She became determined to help others.

"We have an ageing community and we will one day become part of that," she says.

"If people have given so much to society it is important they are now looked after and live well with dementia. That is why I do what I do." Marie joined the Trust in 2015 as a dementia link nurse. She then joined the Luton Memory

Assessment Service (MAS), helped launch DISS in 2019 as manager and was then appointed as acting operations manager in the Bedford Older People's CMHT.

In 2021 Marie was made operations manager for the older people's crisis team and operations manager for DISS.

Marie and colleagues are proud to be members of the first DISS for the Trust and the first in BLMK.

She sees DISS as bridging the gap between MAS and CMHTs for older people.

"When I first joined the team families were facing carer stress and we had a lot of people attending emergency departments or being admitted to hospital," says Marie.

"Through DISS we are there post diagnosis and for the journey of the person living with dementia. People are living better in the community with dementia."

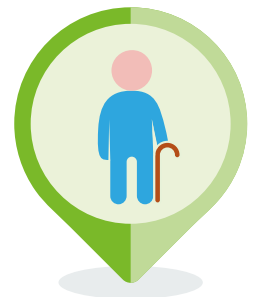
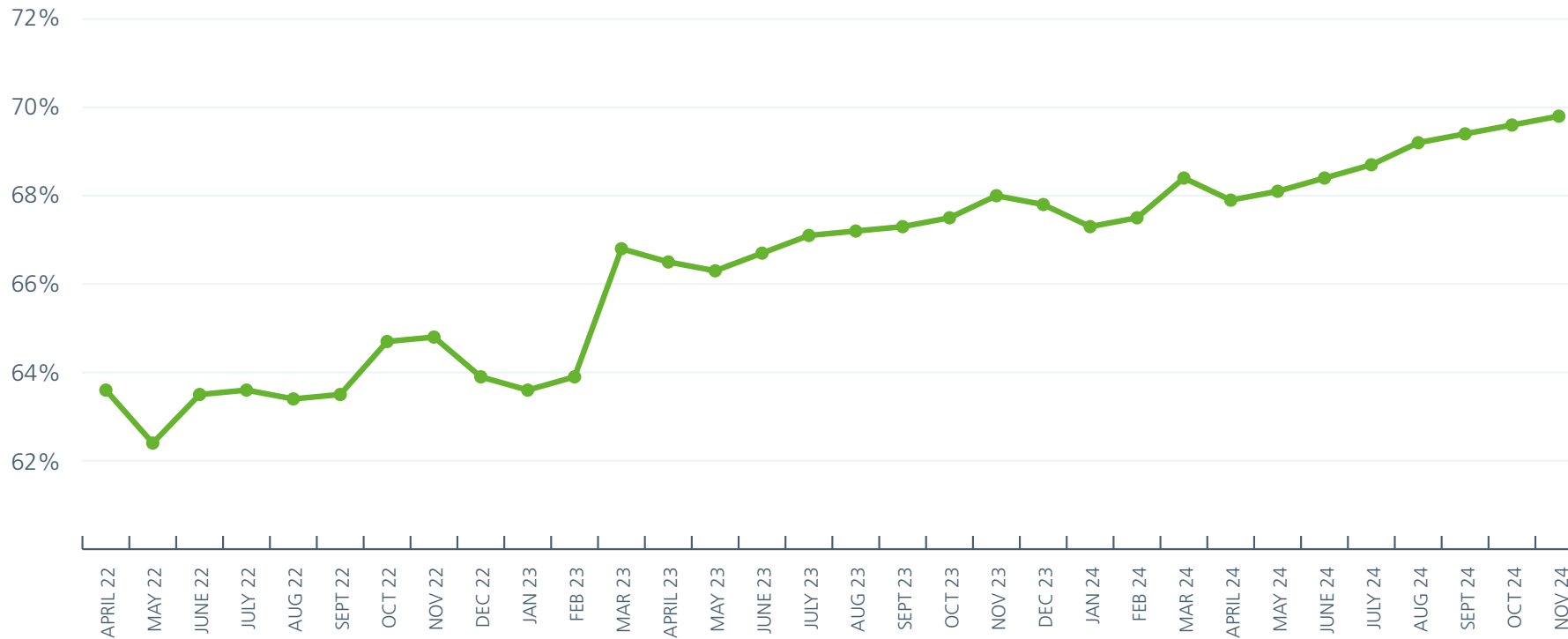
"I have worked in working age mental health services but looking after older people is my passion. I love what I do."



For the first time, we've surpassed the national dementia diagnosis prevalence target - **reaching 69.3% across BLMK as of January 2025**, compared to the national target of 66.7%.



Number of people aged 65 or over diagnosed with dementia in BLMK



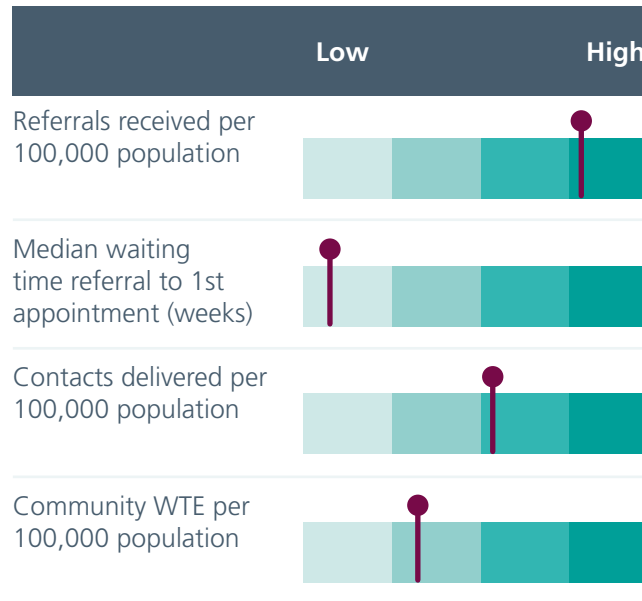


How do Bedfordshire and Luton mental health services compare nationally?

The NHS Benchmarking Network have published data relating to the financial year April 2023 to March 2024. Over 70 trusts took part in the latest published exercise.



Community Adult

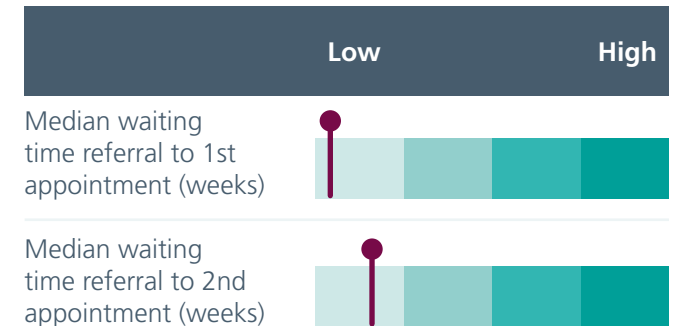


Services are very busy in terms of referrals received for the population size (top national quartile) indicating good access across the population.

1st appointment waiting times have been kept low (lowest national quartile) despite high referral rate.

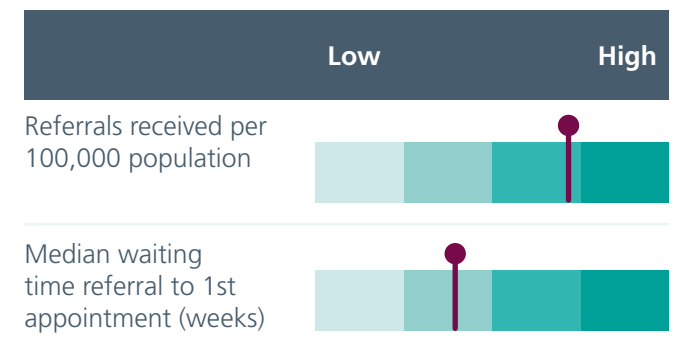
Above average (median) contacts are delivered for the population size with a lower-than-average staff size indicating a good contact per staff ratio.

Community Older Adult



Waiting times for both 1st and 2nd appointment are in the lowest national quartile.

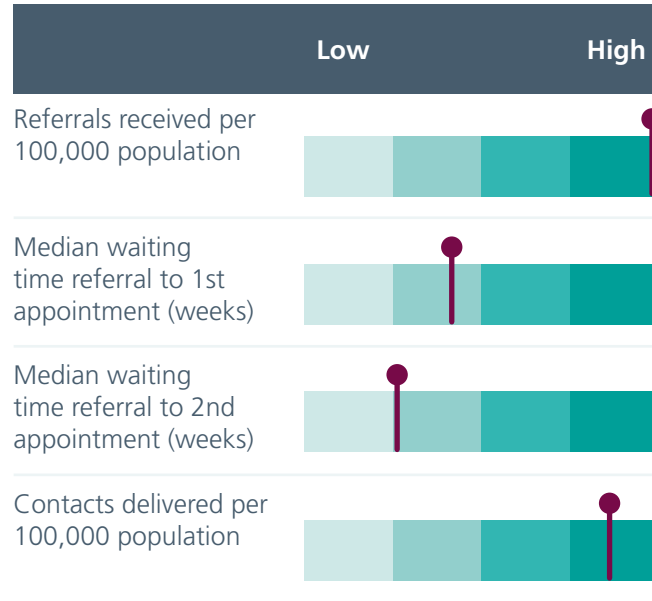
Early Intervention for Psychosis



Despite a busy service (just outside the top national quartile) 1st appointment waiting times have been kept below average (median).

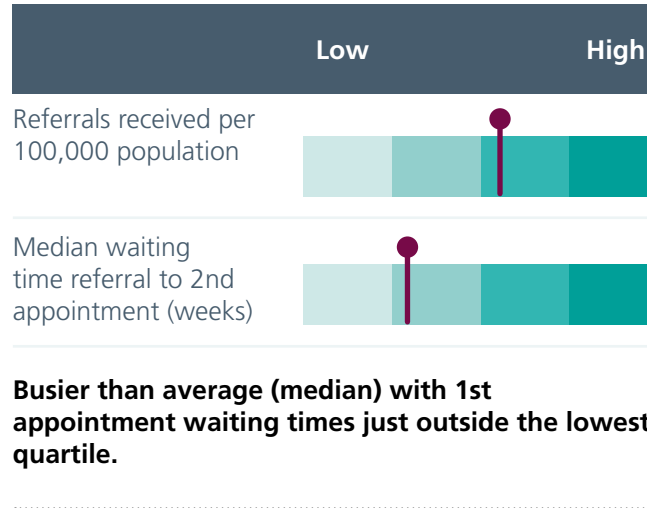


Crisis Resolution and Home Treatment



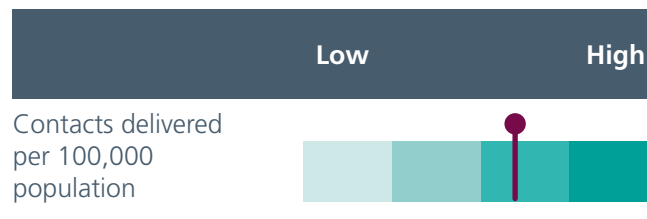
A very busy service both in terms of referrals and contacts, for population size, delivering low waiting times.

Autism Spectrum Disorder

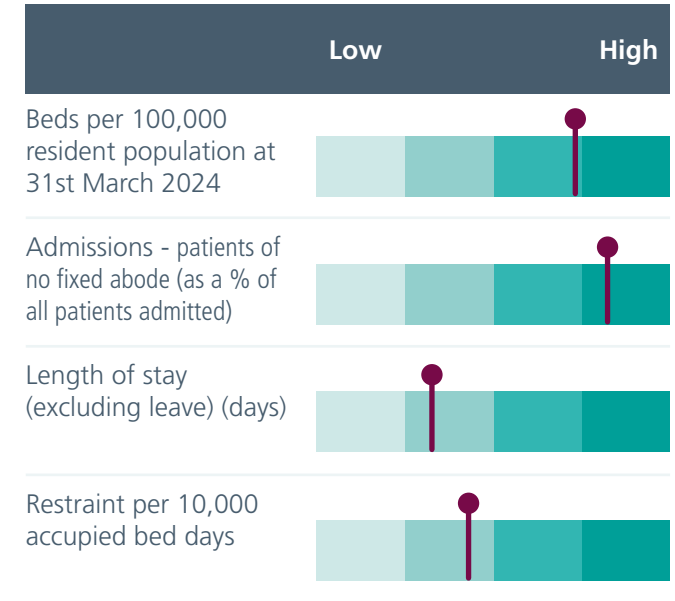


Busier than average (median) with 1st appointment waiting times just outside the lowest quartile.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder



Inpatient



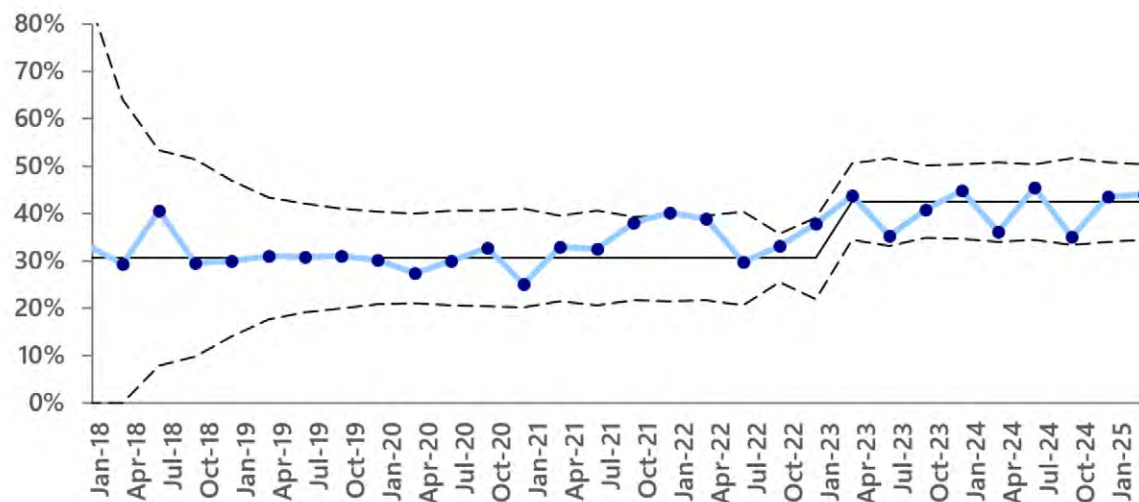
High bed provision for the population size which manages a population with a high amount of homelessness. Low length of stay with low incidents of restraint.



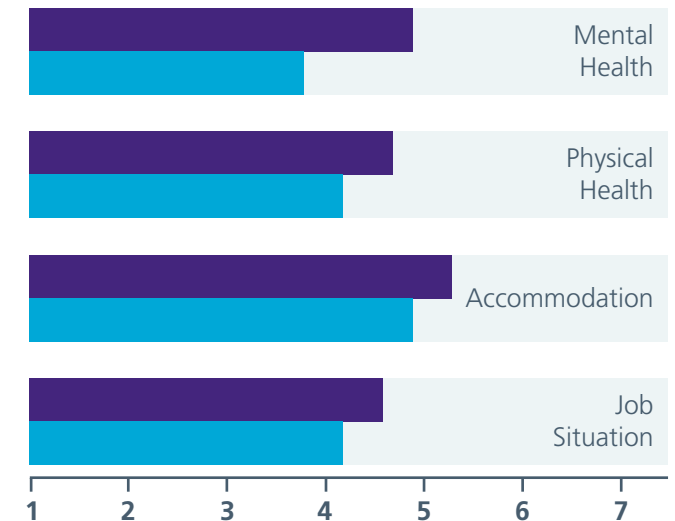
What improvements have our Bedfordshire and Luton service users seen in their lives?

Paired patient outcome scores allows improvement to be analysed at an individual patient level. Almost 100,000 paired scores have been recorded since 2022 and we are recording at more than double the national average. In Bedfordshire and Luton since April 2023 over 40% of service users have seen an improvement in their overall outcome scores across eight life domains. Looking at the four life domains, Mental Health, Physical Health, Accommodation and Job Situation all have seen an increase in satisfaction level in treatment. One in four service users has seen improvement at a level that has moved them from being dissatisfied with their mental health to satisfied with their mental health during treatment.

Adult Mental Health - Improvement in Paired Outcome Score (P Chart)



Patient Outcome Scores Averages Before & After Treatment (March 2023 - February 2025)



Score

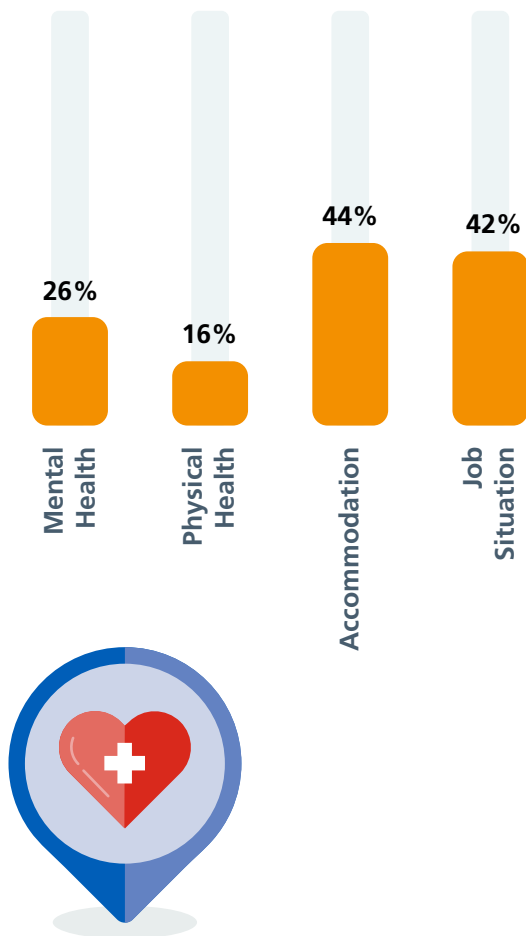
1-3 = dissatisfied
4 = in the middle
5-7 = satisfied

Key

● Final score
● Initial score



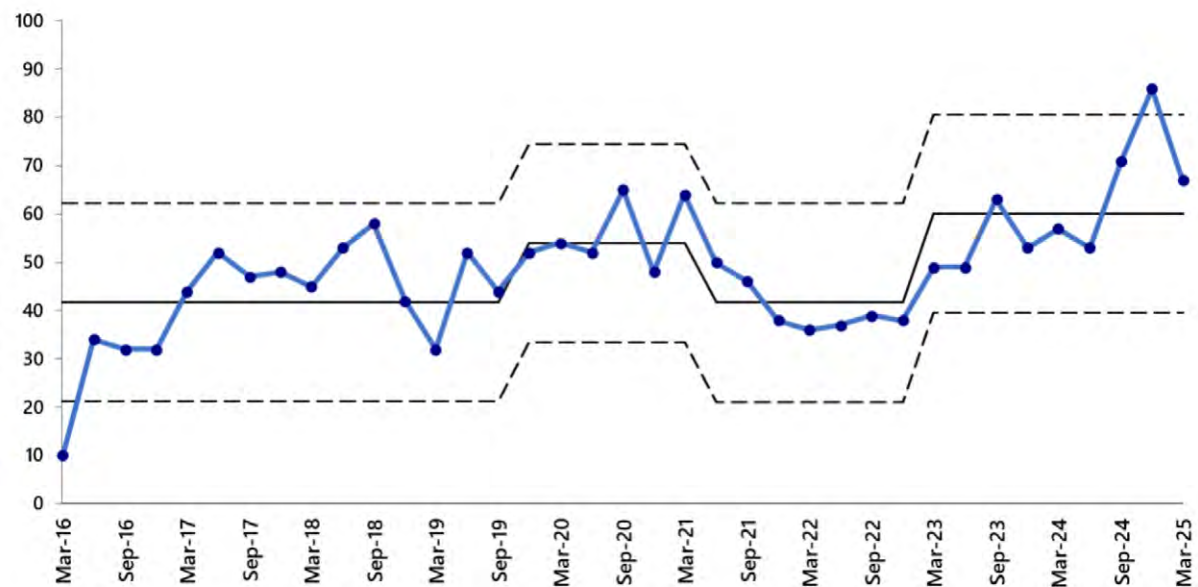
Percentage of patients moved into satisfaction from dissatisfaction at the start of treatment (March 2023 - February 2025)



Early Intervention in Psychosis (EIP) services are community-based mental health programs designed to help individuals experiencing their first episode of psychosis or at high risk of developing it.

These services aim to reduce treatment delays, promote recovery, and decrease the likelihood of relapse. In Bedfordshire and Luton we now see almost 50% more patients per month within the recommended two-week period from referral than in 2016.

Patients seen within 2 weeks for Early Waiters Intervention Psychosis (I Chart)





Our Services | Learning Disabilities and Autism



Overcoming barriers and reducing health inequalities is a shared goal for Trust colleagues working to support people with a Learning Disability (LD), says [Simone Mingay](#).

Simone is clinical nurse manager for the Bedfordshire and Luton health equalities service and started with the Trust as lead liaison nurse at Bedford Hospital.

Simone supported LD service users at the hospital during the COVID-19 pandemic and now leads on work to improve the physical health of service users.

The service works with service users, carers, community groups, GPs, hospitals and other partners in health prevention and health promotion with a clear objective of helping LD service users improve their health and to reduce hospital admissions.

Simone says all colleagues care passionately about supporting service users and in working to address the inequalities they experience compared to the general population, including shorter life expectancy, increased risk of preventable deaths, and limited access to education and employment.

Working with primary care colleagues, the service has launched a pilot LD friendly GP accreditation scheme with the ambition that it will be adopted across BLMK.

"It includes good completion rates of annual health checks but it is not just a programme that looks at data – it is about ensuring people with a LD have a really good experience when they go to a GP practice," said Simone.

"As a service and as a healthcare system we have made an awful lot of progress in health promotion and health prevention and we see this programme as an extension of that really valuable work."

Simone says health prevention and promotion has included working with carers to increase their knowledge and know what actions to take when someone is showing a deterioration. "Admission to hospital is not great for anybody, but more so for people with a LD, added Simone.

"We know that community, and home, are the best settings and we work to develop better systems with community organisations and community teams that help keep people out of hospital.

"I think care has come on in leaps and bounds. Every member of the team pulls together for the same common reason and I feel very fortunate to work alongside an amazing group of people."



The mainstreaming of mental health inpatient care for people who have a LD has been another area of improved care.

LD service colleagues now work closely with mental health inpatient teams to deliver a transforming care approach that considers a community first approach and admission only when necessary.

An MDT approach, visits by LD service teams to wards within 24hrs of a client being admitted, reasonable adjustments, specific treatment and care plans and provision of wraparound support in a central location are all reducing lengths of inpatient stays for LD clients.

“Clients are only admitted if there is a need for mental health support and we have a clear structure and approach that focuses on helping those individuals get back to their home environment and avoid lengthy and unnecessary periods of inpatient care,” says Saeedah Khan, acting clinical team manager for the intensive support team, part of services for people who have a Learning Disability.

The Coppice in Central Bedfordshire was used for LD inpatient care until 2019, when the approach to deliver care for LD clients in mainstream mental health inpatient services was developed.

“The change has opened a pathway that is safer, provides wraparound multi-disciplinary care, reduces admissions, ensures timely discharges and has a clear pathway to community support,” added Saeedah.

“It has been a huge step forward in delivering person-centred care.”



Our Services | Path 2 Recovery Addictions Services



Former clients making contact to share their stories of remaining clear of drugs and alcohol after treatment from Path 2 Recovery (P2R) is one of the most satisfying part of the job says service manager **Tawanda Hakulandaba**.

Tawanda has been leading the P2R team for the last three years in their work to support adults with substance misuse across Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire.

He is proud of how the team have embedded a holistic approach to care for their clients, looking at all of the factors which might impact someone's recovery.

The team consider social needs, housing and medical support for their clients and have developed close working relationships with colleagues from mental health services, helping coordinate care for clients with a dual diagnosis. "We record consistently good completion rates and there is nothing more satisfying than having former clients get in touch to tell us they have

been clear for six months, a year or longer," says Tawanda.

"We all take immense pride in supporting people to break the cycle of substance misuse." Tawanda also managed ELFT's county-wide crisis team for seven years before joining P2R and helped launch the NHS 111 (option 2) mental health crisis support service which provides support for all ages 24hrs a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.



Since becoming part of ELFT, P2R has had **4,633 patients** leave the treatment system abstinent from drugs or alcohol, or no longer using problematically.

The P2R team has linked with the De Parys PCN to develop an addiction model of care that supports safer prescribing in primary care and identifies people dependent on prescribed medication who would benefit from formal treatment from P2R.



Our Services | Community Health

Bedfordshire Community Health Services (BCHS) provides adult community health services to the residents of Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire.

BCHS receives about 7,000 referrals a month across the following services:

- District nursing (unplanned care)
- Unplanned care (rapid response, virtual wards and 2hr response)
- Community therapy
- Community Clinical Health Psychology Services
- Complex care team
- Discharge planning
- Intermediate care (community and beds)
- End of life
- Heart failure
- Podiatry
- Tissue viability
- TB nursing
- Wheelchair services (including Luton)





Bedfordshire Community Health Services (BCHS) deputy lead nurse for unplanned care Sarah Denmead has been involved with a range of service improvements and initiatives.

Sarah joined BCHS as a newly qualified community nurse, progressing to become a band 6 caseload holder in district nursing, district nursing team lead, band 8a with the primary care at home team for north Bedfordshire for district nursing and was service manager for the BCHS rapid response service before successfully applying for her current role.

She takes satisfaction from changes made to improve patient care when manager for the primary care at home team in Bedford, which works to deliver routine primary care services directly to patients in their homes.

The service was struggling with retention and recruitment, had a high use of agency staff and had high numbers of complaints. By working with, and listening to, team members the team made a number of changes to improve care and the working experience for BCHS colleagues. One of the changes made was to the catheter caseload, reviewing how many catheter patients the service was supporting and reviewing clinical reasoning for why catheters were inserted in the first instance.

“We are now seeing more people who are relatively young, and still working, so we introduced clinics for people who are mobile and reduced the numbers of patients who required a catheter by review and trial without catheter where appropriate,” said Sarah.

“Those changes have made a significant improvement to the quality of life for many of our patients.”

Sarah has also been the lead on the introduction of virtual wards for BCHS, with frailty virtual

wards now in place for south and north Bedfordshire and a standalone BCHS virtual ward for patients that need a follow-up after an initial healthcare visit by rapid response.

“The virtual wards programme is relatively new but is already making a difference in how we provide care,” added Sarah.

“We are helping more people remain in their preferred place of care, we are aiming to provide the equivalent level of care to a hospital admission and we are developing staff through upskilling. The virtual wards are also helping reduce hospital admission and stays, preventing the deconditioning of patients and the system is helping reduce pressure on both acute and ambulance trust partners.”

Sarah says one of the biggest appeals of the job is that she can make a difference for patients and for BCHS staff.

“It is so important we support colleagues and think about their wellbeing and how we support them.”





Another example of the partnership approach by BCHS to improve care has been the Access to the Stack programme.

EEAST, BCHS and other partner Rapid Response Teams work together to prevent hospital conveyance.

They received national recognition after receiving the Improving Urgent and Emergency Care Through Digital Award at the HSJ Digital Awards 2023.

The award was for the Access to the Stack programme and the use of the cleric digital portal enabler for transferring patients to urgent response teams.

The programme sees BCHS, in its role as a community service provider, review cases where patients have called 999 for an ambulance but they may benefit from a community services response.

This was implemented in November 2022 and has enabled BCHS to respond to patients in crisis in the community with the right clinician for their needs. It also reduces pressure across other NHS services by avoiding the need for an ambulance being sent to support lower acuity patients.

The patient is seen by a nurse from the rapid response team, providing a holistic assessment and onward referral if needed, avoiding hospital admission and keeping the patient at home when it is safe to do so. The pathway is also supported by colleagues with BCHS community matrons and therapies.



Clinical lead **Helen Mills** has been the driving force behind a trailblazing BCHS Working Together programme that wraps health and social care around the needs of individual patients.

A pilot Working Together in Leighton Buzzard was launched in 2021 and expanded to Dunstable in 2023. The programme has now expanded to cover all of Central Bedfordshire and

is being established for the people of Bedford Borough.

Working Together is a partnership approach led by BCHS and Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) and to better connect health and social care needs for individual patients, particularly those with complex needs. Health and social care professionals discuss the needs of individuals and ensure all relevant services are linked together and providing the support that people need.

Its aim is to help people who need support from more than one agency get all of the help they need, to help them stay out of hospital and to strengthen how different services communicate and provide joined-up care.

More than 100 patients are on the current caseload and the programme is providing timely support, preventing admissions and supporting the healthcare system through more effective working.

“To see the programme develop and grow across the county has been incredible,” said Helen.



“A genuine partnership approach involving colleagues from across different organisations has been the key to opening a coordinated pathway with the needs of the individual at the heart of every decision made.”

She added: “Everyone has worked incredibly hard to remove barriers and it is so satisfying when our work provides a safe and supportive alternative to admission to hospital, particularly for people who have previously been caught in a cycle of going in and out of hospital.”

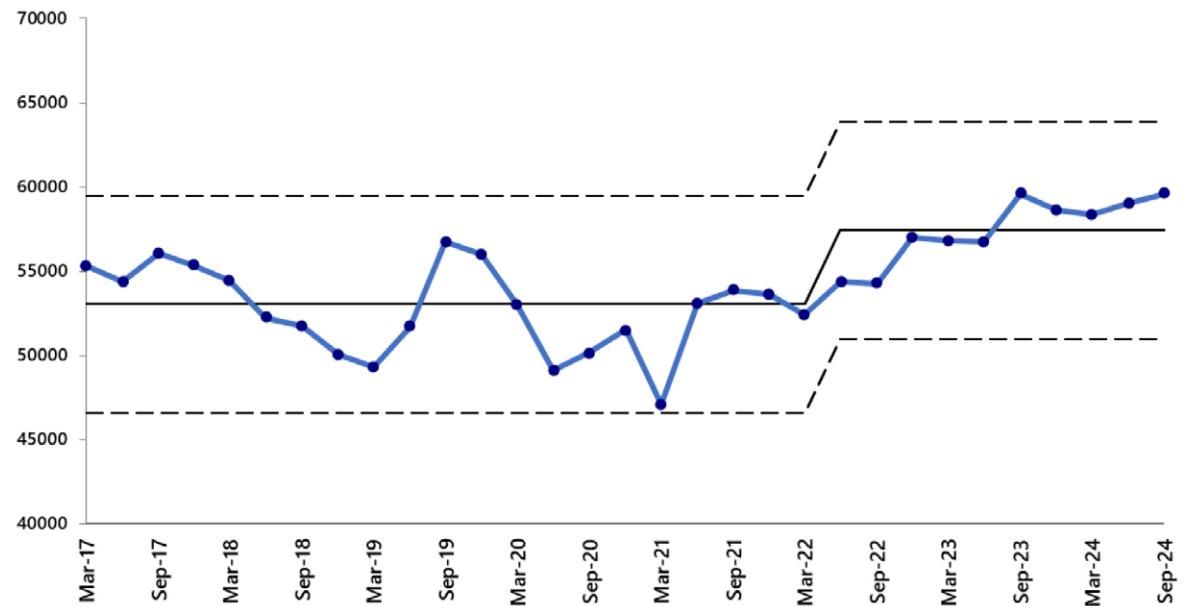
Development of Working Together for Bedford Borough has seen Helen leading on further developing connections with Bedford Hospital teams, including discharge coordinators.

Helen is also working to apply the programme principles in support for care homes in Bedfordshire, with focus on preventative care and issues including pressure ulcers and tissue viability.

District nursing provides nursing care and support to individuals in their homes or residential care settings, focusing on improving, maintaining, and recovering health while addressing complex health needs and promoting independence.

The Trust now makes almost 5,000 more visits per quarter in this setting, an increase that has been mainlined for the last two years

District Nursing Contacts per Quarter (I Chart)





An approach of continuous improvement is helping the BCHS Single Point of Access (SPoA) develop support for patients and clinical services, says BCHS associate director for operations **Irfan Ahmed**.

The SPoA is based at Queensborough House in Dunstable and operates 24/7, providing support for service users and services through a single dedicated contact number.

The service started with two mobile phones at launch and has developed into a digitally advanced operation. More than 50 staff managed an average of 10,000 calls every month.

"The service is continuing to grow but the core principles remain and one of those is ensuring we give the best possible customer support to our callers," said Irfan.

He said the team have helped improve the patient journey by ensuring all callers end their conversation having been provided with clear and practical information, delivered in a professional and friendly manner.

The digital first approach of the SPoA includes an electronic referral portal, dispensing with the time-consuming use of Word document forms being downloaded, populated, uploaded and emailed as attachments.

Automated feedback tools have been added to the system and the SPoA also continually reviews algorithms with services to ensure the right information is being captured for clinical teams. Irfan was in a band 7 role when BCHS was formed. Now an associate director, he has been supported by ELFT in completing his Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) in Health Care Management.

"The approach of the Trust in providing opportunities for professional development, including myself and others in non-clinical roles, is fantastic," he added.

"The Trust has also given us more autonomy. The key message has been 'you know your community and you know what will improve care, so crack on!'"

"Support is always available but having the freedom to test new ideas is incredibly empowering."





Working with dedicated colleagues to innovate, be creative and try new approaches, has been one of the most rewarding experiences and key to the progress of BCHS Clinical Health Psychology Services (CHPS), says **Dr Sara Rassool.**

Sara, Macmillan consultant clinical psychologist & lead for CHPS in Bedfordshire and Luton, describes the team as having a combination of both clinical and health psychology specialist knowledge and skills that truly benefit patient care.

She has been with the service since 2019 and has been instrumental in its expansion from three colleagues to more than 30 colleagues and trainees working across 12 physical health fields.

The services work with partner organisations across the system, preventing and intervening in the psychological health associated to physical health adversity. They work across organisational boundaries in various settings to ensure the focus is on the needs of the patients. "Integrating into medical spaces and teams, bringing psychologically informed ways of working is not just beneficial for improved patient care and outcomes but also benefits the doctors and nurses approach to treatment and care", said Sara.

"Thinking about the needs of the individual and our diverse populations has helped us develop different approaches and I love that our teams embrace and value improvement, and will always try something new."

Sara said that despite working in the clinical health field for over 20 years, the COVID-19 pandemic put the spotlight on the work of CHPS, highlighting the need for an integrated 'body and mind' approach to healthcare. The pandemic also marked the start of CHPS critical care psychology provision and staff work and wellbeing service at Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, as the team helped hospital staff stay safe and well so they could continue providing vital care.

The CHPS services are varied, and led by fantastic psychologists from regional specialists innovating in the bariatric field, to fatigue specialist MDTs across BLMK.

"We are also privileged to have dedicated CHP occupational therapists and physios within parts of the service who have amazing," added Sara.

The team pride themselves on working with the wider workforce and have expanded their training programmes for end of life care colleagues, GP trainees, preceptorship cohorts within the acute hospitals and psychological skills training for all cancer specialists across Bedfordshire and Luton to now include Milton Keynes.



“Teaching, training and upskilling the wider workforce is so important, good psychological care is everyone’s responsibility and can often mean that we are working upstream to prevent escalation to secondary care mental health,” she added.

Sara has also been recently appointed as deputy clinical lead for the cancer programme for BLMK, providing an opportunity to shape change across the system.

The programme is exploring issues from school education and wider determinants of health and inequities, through to cancer screening, diagnosis, treatments and living well with, and beyond cancer.

“This is a really exciting opportunity to shape those broader strategies that influence care across a large system,” she said.

Specialist CHPS Provision:

Bedford and Luton hospitals /BLMK / CHS

- Chronic fatigue syndrome MDT (CFS)
- Macmillan cancer & palliative care
- Diabetes
- Respiratory
- Post Covid fatigue MDT services
- Critical care
- Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, staff work & wellbeing

Luton & Dunstable University Hospital only (mental health oversight)

- HIV & sexual health
- General medicine
- Secondary care integrated pain
- Bariatrics and obesity
- Prosthetics (Limb fitting)





How do ELFT district nursing services in Bedfordshire compare nationally?

The NHS Benchmarking Network, compiling data from over 50 NHS Trusts in 2023/2024 finds ELFT Bedfordshire services to be:

- In higher-than-average demand by referrals received for population size (above the median), with a high acceptance rate (upper quartile). The data indicates to meet this demand the service is heavily reliant on bank and agency staff (upper quartile) with low (lower quartile) registered nurses for the population size.
- Despite high referral demand nurse's typically have a small caseload sizes (lower than median) which the data indicates is managed by service users spending short (lower quartile) spells on the caseload.
- Clinical undertake many contacts (upper quartile) with these small sized caseloads and when a face to face contact is made it is particularly long session (upper quartile).
- Patient Safety Incidents (PSIs) reported per service user is high (upper quartile) which while concerning could be a result of good recording practice.

2024/2024	Low	High	Median	ELFT
Number of referrals received per 100,000 65+ population			31,820.4	35,767.2
Referral acceptance rate (%)			97%	100%
Caseload per registered nurse WTE in establishment at the end of the year			24.0	22.1
Average time on caseload (days)			51.2	26.0
Total contacts per clinical WTE in post			1,664.3	2,696.5
Average length of a face-to-face contact (minutes)			25.9	57.0
Registered nursing staff WTE in establishment per 100,000 population			31.7	24.2
Bank and agency spend as a percentage of total pay spend (%)			12.5%	70.6%
Number of patient safety incidents reported by the service during the year per 100 unique service users			15.3	36

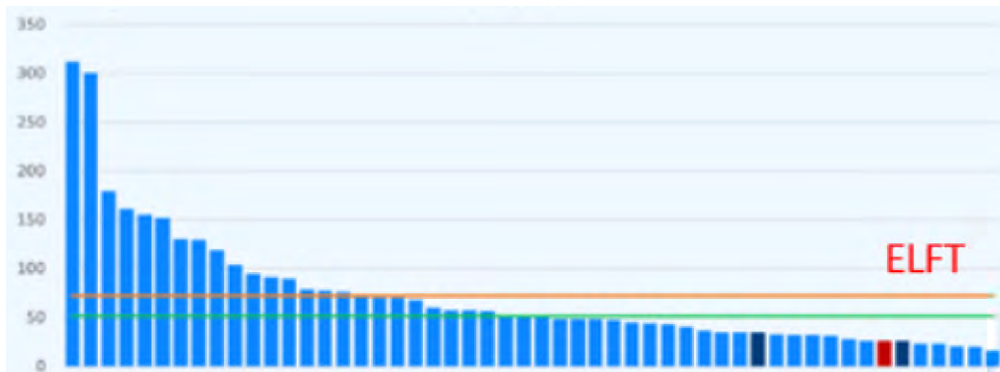


Bedfordshire 2023/2024 (NHS Benchmarking Network)

Total contacts per clinical WTE in post



Average time on the caseload (days)





Our Partnerships





Our Partnerships



More people are receiving the right help and police officers are attending 300 incidents less every month as a result of work with ELFT and other system partners to improve mental health support, says the **Chief Constable of Bedfordshire Police Trevor Rodenhurst**.

A collaborative approach has been developed over the last 10 years that puts the needs of the

individual at the centre of any system response, with one significant change being the reduction in officers called to incidents where there is no obvious need for policing.

The Chief Constable has highlighted the partnership Right Care, Right Person (RCRP) model as one example of progress through the long-standing collaborative relationship. RCRP ensures ELFT, local authorities and the force work together to ensure the right health or social care service responds to incidents, rather than automatically defaulting to police intervention, especially for health-related concerns.

This approach aims to provide timely and appropriate support to individuals in need, prevent further distress, and allow police to focus on their core duties.

"I think progress with ELFT over the last 10 years has been built on trusted relationships, greater understanding of the services that each other offer and with leaders being willing to look at the system and how it is working so we can maximise our collective effort," said Trevor.

Expertise and access to patient data is available to the force through a mental health nurse embedded within the force control centre, helping choose the most appropriate response. ELFT, Bedfordshire Police and EEast have also operated a mental health street triage vehicle since 2016.

There have been no individuals taken into custody over the last few years under section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983, a result of improved understanding of options and signposting. In 2016 the force was taking more than 100 people a year into custody through s136.

"Bedfordshire Police and ELFT work together and within the system really well," said Trevor, who was recognised in the 2025 New Year's Honours List with a King's Police Medal (KPM).

"There is still a lot to do but a shared commitment to provide the best services for local people provides the foundations for us to continue making progress."



Combining different strengths of the NHS and voluntary sector provide blended support for communities across the county, says Mind BLMK Chief Executive **Caroline Lewis.**

The charity and ELFT are long-standing partners in Bedfordshire and Luton.

Mind community connectors are embedded within ELFT community mental health services and the two organisations work together to

provide the county-wide Recovery Lounge network and the newly-launched Service User Network (SUN) to improve community support for people with complex emotional needs. Caroline believes the value in the NHS and voluntary sector organisations working together is the variety of support they can offer.

“The partnership approach enables us both to do what we do best and focus on supporting the individual in the right way at the right time,” she said.

“Together we are able to provide flexible options and blended support, ensuring the offer is not completely clinical and not completely voluntary sector facing.”

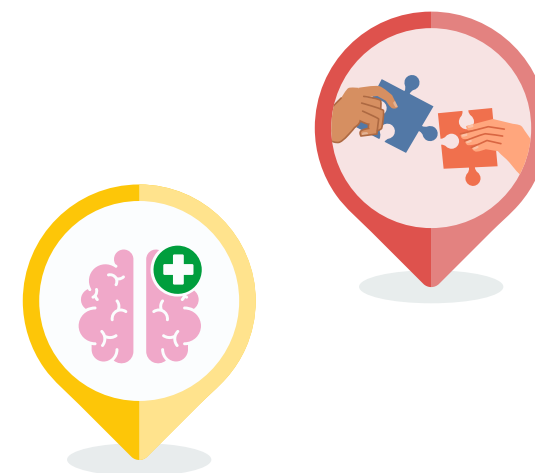
Caroline described the Recovery Lounge service as an example of how the partnership working benefits communities served by both organisations.

“We have worked really hard to create a safe space to help people at point of mental health crisis,” added Caroline.

“We listened to what people wanted and have established a warm, friendly service that provides support, signposting and avoids the need to go to A&E or your GP.”

Caroline said Mind and other organisations have benefited from Trust mental health alliance funding, which helps the voluntary sector come together to learn, build and develop to offer improve mental health support.

“My hope for the future is the NHS and voluntary sector continue working side by side in developing support for people across Bedfordshire and Luton.”





Continuing collaboration to make the redevelopment of Bedford Health Village a reality is one example of how ELFT and local authorities work in close partnership, says Bedford Borough Council Chief Executive **Laura Church.**

The Trust, council, BLMK ICB and other organisations have been long-term partners in developing a vision to build new mental health inpatient services on the health village in Kimbolton Road, also known as the Bedford Hospital north wing site.

Behind-the-scenes work has taken place over years and ELFT conducted a public case for change engagement programme in 2021. The case for change outlined why we think a modernisation programme is the right thing to do – and asked for people to share their views, join the conversation and help take ideas forward.

A significant barrier to developing the north wing site remains with ELFT needing approval to fund any build, as the investment would significantly exceed the Trust's capital spending limits.

Laura says that while difficulties remain, she is also keen to emphasise how much partnership work is taking place to find solutions.

"I would definitely say how we are working with ELFT to overcome the north site conundrum is a clear demonstration of how our approach to partnership working has developed," she said.

"We have supported each other and I take pride in how we were able to send a letter saying we needed to do something about north wing which was signed by all system and partner CEOs – which is something that doesn't happen very often at all."

Reflecting on changes over the last 10 years Laura also highlighted ELFT's commitment to working at place, clear communication from its leadership team and how relationships between the two organisations have evolved from contractual to a joint approach that considers how to support communities together.

"I would consider one of the Trust's great strengths is its ability to listen and involve people in service development and responding to needs," added Laura.

"I have always found the people at ELFT to be professional, caring and committed. Thank you for all of the hard work that you do."



A focus on delivering accessible services and prevention of poor health have been among areas of key progress by the Trust in providing care for communities in Bedfordshire and Luton, says **Richard Carr.**

Richard is a Non-Executive Director (NED) at the Trust, having joined in December 2020. He was the first Chief Executive of Central Bedfordshire Council, formed through the merger of a county council and two district councils in 2009.

From 2017 to 2020, Richard was also the Senior Responsible Officer for the BLMK ICB, where he gained first-hand experience of the Trust's work in the region.

"It became clear to me that ELFT was a natural ally and that we had the same objectives. The Trust has put a lot of energy into ensuring services are accessible, while co-designing these with service users," he said.

During his time with BLMK, and in the early days as a NED at ELFT, Richard realised that the Trust wasn't just trying to respond to active issues facing service users.

"ELFT focusses a lot on prevention and the factors that can influence poor health, such as lack of access to secure housing and a stable income. This is seen through our role as an Anchor Institution."

An anchor institution is defined as a large, public sector organisation that has a significant stake in a geographical area, as they are 'anchored' in their surrounding community.

Looking ahead to the future, Richard would like to see work across Bedfordshire and Luton tied in with economic growth to unlock opportunities

for our communities in the region.

"We should continue to explore the root cause of mental health issues facing people, including financial worries."

He ended by emphasising the need to build an ever-greater culture of collaboration across Bedfordshire and Luton.

"Thank you to our staff, service users, carers and families who are helping to build resilience, and equipping people with the skills and confidence they need to realise their full potential."





Partnership is key to take forward our commitment to population health as a Trust, including collaborating with local authorities, voluntary and community groups and other anchor organisations.

In 2021, ELFT began working with the Institute of Health Equity to become the first NHS 'Marmot Trust', testing the boundaries of what an NHS Trust can and should do to improve the health of the whole population it serves by using the evidence-based principles of Professor Sir Michael Marmot.

At the same time, Luton became the first 'Marmot Town', using Marmot principles to inform actions based on fairness and social justice to help achieve Luton's 2040 vision. This provides a common approach to reducing health inequalities across our organisations.

Shared work in Luton includes taking action to increase access to good quality work and a living wage, and to help support those with mental health conditions into work. ELFT developed training in partnership with Luton Council and Total Wellbeing Luton on the importance of good quality work and how to create a workplace that is supportive for people who may have mental ill health. In addition, through working in partnership with Luton Adult Learning, ELFT supported mental health first aid courses to grow capacity within Luton organisations to spot and respond to signs of mental health issues amongst staff. This work is continuing through the BLMK Integrated Care Partnerships (ICPs) in the Work and Health Stewardship group.

This group consists of stakeholders all across the BLMK footprint – NHS, ICB and local authority staff, VCSEs and service users and carers and is supporting development of more and different intervention pathways into employment. The

support is being developed for not only people seeking work but also for employers, so they are better equipped to welcome people with additional needs into their workforce. This includes supported opportunities, identifying needs, application support, interview preparation, extended inductions, supported development and looking at soft skills and transferable skills. The group is aiming to support employers to take ownership of the programme which should result in improved staff retention rates and better wellbeing amongst employees.

Our Marmot principles also support the sharing of approaches where we see positive impacts on the social determinants of health, the conditions that support us to live well in our day to day lives. For example, following a successful pilot in Newham we are now working in partnership to test a Healthier Wealthier Families project in Luton, helping reduce the negative impacts of child poverty that affect too many families in our communities. Our partnership approach was shared at the European public health conference in 2024 alongside colleagues from the Institute of Health Equity and Bedfordshire University.



ELFT awards and achievements

2025

- UK-Africa Health Summit Global Health Partnership – Diaspora Healthcare Champion Award – Lucia Vambe, Corporate Lead Nurse in Education and Development
- Queen's Nursing Institute – Elsie Wagg Scholarship – Twinwoods Health Resource Centre
- British Association of Social Workers – 'Amazing Social Work Leaders' – Tracey Wright, Social Worker, Biggleswade CMHT
- British Association of Social Workers – 'Amazing Social Work Leaders' – Martin Orr, Operational Manager, Biggleswade CMHT
- New Year's Honours – Edwin Ndlovu MBE, Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Chief Executive
- Lorraine Sunduza OBE named in HSJ Top 50 CEOs

2024

- Building Better Healthcare Awards – Team of the Year – Estates & Facilities

- HSJ Digital Awards – Driving Change Through Data and Analytics' Award – Data & Analytics Team
- Design in Mental Health Awards – Team of the Year – Estates and Facilities
- HSJ – Most Influential NHS BAME Figures – Tanya Carter, Chief People Officer
- HSJ – Most Influential NHS BAME Figures, Alumni List – Dame Donna Kinnair, Non-Executive Director
- HSJ – Top 50 NHS Leaders – Lorraine Sunduza OBE
- King's Birthday Honours – Dr Amar Shah MBE, Chief Quality Officer
- Primary Care Impact Awards – Excellence in Patient Communication Award – Cauldwell Medical Practice
- New Year's Honours – Lorraine Sunduza OBE, Chief Executive

2023

- Royal College of Psychiatrists Awards – Patient Contributor of the Year – Peer Support Training Lead, Lenna Adley
- Queen's Nurse Awards – Nurse of the Year – Julie Roye, Lead Nurse for Primary Care
- Community Awards for Luton and Bedfordshire – Health Care Hero Award – Chris Gibbons, Prison Reconnect Worker
- Community Awards for Luton and Bedfordshire – Health Care Hero Award – Luton and Bedfordshire Liaison and Diversion
- VMWare International Customer Cloud Technology Award – ELFT Infrastructure Team for Digital Infrastructure Programme
- HSJ 50 Most Influential BAME People in Health – Tanya Carter, Chief People Officer
- HSJ 50 Most Influential BAME People in Health – Dame Donna Kinnair, Non-Executive Director
- NHS Pastoral Care Quality Award – International Recruitment and High Quality Pastoral Care to Overseas Staff



- Learning Disabilities and Autism Awards – Chelsea Laing, BLMK CAMHS Nurse (Highly Commended)
- HSJ Digital Awards – The Bedfordshire Community Health Service Single Point of Access Collaboration

2022

- HPMa Awards – Team of the Year – People & Culture
- HPMa Awards – Director of the Year – Tanya Carter, Chief People Officer
- Zenith Global Health Award – Ruth Bradley, Director of Nursing, Integrated Care
- International Quality Awards – Team of the Year: Quality Department
- The Royal Statistical Society and the Health Foundation Florence Nightingale Award – ELFT Visual Analytics Team for Excellence in Healthcare Analytics

2021

- HealthTech Digital Awards – Best COVID-19 Solution for Mental Health: Digital Innovators Improve Well and ELFT's QI Team

- National Award for Inpatients Police Partnership Programme – Richard Harwin, Health, Safety, Security & Emergency Planning Manager with Bedfordshire Police.
- HSJ NHS Workplace Race Equality Award – WRES Category for Compassion and Equality in Employer Relations – People & Culture Team

2020

- NHS Parliamentary Awards – Regional Care and Compassion Award – Bedfordshire Integrated Discharge Hub
- Cavell Stars – Bedfordshire Palliative Care Team
- Cavell Stars – Sarah Stringer, Bedfordshire Community Matron
- New Year's Honours – British Empire Medal – Debbie Buck, Lead Nurse, Bedfordshire

2019

- Positive Practice National Children & Young People's Mental Health Awards – Liaison & Intensive Support Award – Bedfordshire and Luton CAMHS Crisis Service
- HSJ Most Effective Litigation Award – ELFT Legal Affairs

- Howard League for Penal Reform for Work with Female Offenders – Bedfordshire and Luton Liaison and Diversion Service

2018

- National Mental Health Awards – Quality Improvement Award – Bridging the Bedford Gap Project
- Royal College of Psychiatry Awards – Psychiatric Trainer of the Year – Dr Chris O'Loughlin, Head of School of Psychiatry of the East of England Deanery

2017

- Bedfordshire Junior Young Person of the Year Award – Roshni Patel, CAMHS Service User

2016

- HSJ Awards – Provider Trust of the Year – ELFT
- University of Bedfordshire – Honorary Doctorate – Ben Salmons, 'Break the Stigma' Campaign Manager
- Financial Times – Top 20 LGBT+ Influential People – Ken Batty, Non-Executive Director



Innovation, excellence and commitment to patient care are celebrated every year at the ELFT Staff Awards.

Here are winners from our Bedfordshire and Luton services over the last five years.

2024 Staff Awards

- Commissioners Award, Improving Population Health – Luton Community Mental Health Services and Hatters Health Primary Care Network
- Star of the Future Award – Maryam Shafait, Luton Mental Health
- Improving Service User Experience Award – Evergreen CAMHS Inpatient Unit, Luton
- Improving Staff Experience Award – Daniela Diaconu, Luton North Hub Community Mental Health Team
- The Make a Difference Award – Dr Kim Caldwell and Dr Jeannette Fuller, Bedfordshire & Luton Older People's Psychology
- Because of You Award – Simon Bedeau, Learning Disability Services

2023 Staff Awards

- Commissioner's Award, Improving Population Health – Primary Care Mental Health Link Worker Service, Luton and Bedfordshire
- Dr Robert Dolan Leadership Award – Matthew Sparks, CHS Bedford
- Improving Service User Experience Award – Katrice Russell, Luton Community Mental Health Team (CMHT)
- Support Services Award – Molly Burton, Luton Mental Health
- Service User Award for a Special Person – Kamila Naseova, BHS Bedford
- Greener Health Award – Bedfordshire Continence Service, CHS Specialist Services



2022 Staff Awards

- Chairs 'Behind the Scenes' Award – Aimee Prowle, Chronic Fatigue Service, Community Health Services in Bedfordshire
- Commissioner's Award, Improving Population Health – Luton Blended Team, Luton & Bedfordshire Mental Health & Wellbeing Service
- Improving Staff Experience Award – Denise Locklin, Bedfordshire Continence Service
- Service User Award for a Special Person – Sarah Jane Conley, Luton
- Stars of the Future Awards – Lucy Beaumont-Payne and Phoebe Edwards, Bedfordshire Podiatry Apprentices
- The Make a Difference Award – Sarah Massey, Specialist Services

2021 Staff Awards

- Improving Service User Experience Award – Maria Tzamtzi, Bedfordshire Social Worker
- Commissioner's Award – Bedfordshire & Luton's Community Health Psychology Services
- A Service User Award for a Special Person – Carlene Bantick, Luton Older People's Mental Health Care

2020 Staff Awards

- Improving Patient Experience Luton and Bedfordshire – Niki Scott, Service User Participation Lead for CAMHS, Bedfordshire and Luton (Specialist Services)
- Improving Staff Experience Luton and Bedfordshire – The Single Point of Access team for Bedfordshire Community Health Services
- Star of the Future Award – Luke Daly, Life Skills Recovery Worker, The Lighthouse in Leighton Buzzard
- Commissioner's Award, Bedfordshire and Luton – Bedfordshire CAMHS Parent Emotional Wellbeing Programme Team (Specialist Services)
- Chair's 'Behind the Scenes' Award – Victoria Stone, Louise Hughes and Sarah Denmead, Team Leads for South Bedfordshire Community 'Primary Care at Home'





Afterword

As I reflect on a decade of ELFT providing services across Bedfordshire and Luton, I am filled with a tremendous sense of pride in how much has been achieved by so many wonderful people.

We have come such a long way together since 2015, taking tremendous strides forward in improving care for the communities we serve across Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton.

Talented colleagues have helped lead the way in building a culture of quality and co-production and I have seen so many wonderful service users and carers, many who were with us at the start of our journey, flourish as they guide us along the right path.

Colleagues have embraced opportunities for professional development and become leaders

within the Trust and I love seeing service users first involved through People Participation now employed by us. Those personal journeys inspire me every day.

We are also fortunate to have so many incredible partners who have worked tirelessly to help remove traditional organisational boundaries and develop a collaborative and integrated approach to care built around the needs of the individual. To me, Bedfordshire and Luton are now part of the Trust's DNA.

I see our values of care, respect and inclusivity demonstrated across our services every day with progress across the county built on the foundations of our organisational treasures: our kind and caring staff, PP, QI, our clinical leadership, our diversity and approach to inclusion.

Just some of the improvements to care have included the development of mental health street triage, NHS 111 24hr mental health crisis support for all ages and new services including

a county-wide perinatal mental health service and the integrated maternity and mental health service OCEAN.

Access to care has improved and the opening of the Evergreen mental health inpatient service is helping keep young people close to home and their loved ones.

None of this would have been possible without the commitment of so many exceptional people across the county. Thank you for everything you have achieved.

We still have work to do and I take great comfort that Bedfordshire and Luton colleagues, experts by experience and partners will continue to lead the way.

Lorraine Sunduza OBE
ELFT Chief Executive





East London
NHS Foundation Trust

