

Lay partners

Our role and how we work with the Trust

Our purpose

Lay partners operate by co-producing strategies, programmes and plans with Trust colleagues. We assure projects are patient-centred, integrated and offer holistic care for patients and their communities. Our role is to make sure the Trust has listened to, understood and responded to what patients and the community want, need and prefer.

What is co-production?

Co-production is a way of working that involves people who use health and care services, carers and communities in equal partnership with healthcare professionals. It engages partners at the earliest stages to contribute to the design and development of plans.

Who are lay partners?

- We are volunteers who are patients of the Trust or live in north west London.
- We are a diverse group reflecting, as far as possible, the Trust's communities.
- We listen and constructively challenge as critical friends and trusted and valued partners. We follow the Trust values of being kind and collaborative.
- We are independent and have skills, self-awareness and experience to collaborate effectively at the strategic level.
- We do not have any business interests in the NHS or other healthcare organisations.
- We respect confidentiality at all times and do not share confidential information. We understand that while we may have access to sensitive information, such as early versions of reports, we will never hear or read confidential or patient-identifiable information at any time.

Lay partner role

Co-production and the patient voice

- We co-produce Trust-wide strategic programmes, projects and plans. This is done by joining project groups and attending and contributing to the meetings alongside Trust colleagues and other stakeholders.
- We promote the patient voice and provide external points of view on issues. We do not represent patient views ourselves, but we assure that the relevant patient views are taken into account.
- We contribute to collaborative decisions and propose solutions on the way forward. Our role is not simply to challenge, but to offer solutions and work towards positive outcomes.
- We review project delivery and hold the project leaders accountable to the agreed outcomes.
- While we may have specialist professional expertise, we aren't engaged to provide this on a voluntary basis. Our role is to ensure the patient voice has been considered in them.
- We can also collaborate on practical issues when relevant, such as ideas to improve a project.
- We share our individual healthcare experiences and personal stories when relevant but understand this is not our main purpose.

Collaboration

- We support each other, help induct new lay partners and work to build the lay partner community at the Trust.
- We are ambitious for the health and wellbeing of the people the Trust serves.
- We promote collaboration and shared learning. We contribute relevant information from our contacts and networks and share information and learning back to them.

Way of working

- We prepare for each meeting and attend at least 80 percent of them.
- To ensure meetings are effective, we keep comments broadly related to the project and understand there are other routes for unrelated complaints or other concerns.
- We raise issues or concerns we have with the leader of the programme we are involved in and seek to resolve issues or misunderstandings. If need be, we raise concerns with the head of patient and public partnerships or strategic lay forum chair.
- We will seek feedback on what has worked well as a result of our involvement and what we could do better as part of an evaluation process led by the Trust.
- We promote patient-accessible language in all our work.

Our principles

- We are involved from the start and agree mutual responsibilities and expectations.
- Regardless of professional position or lived experience, we are equal partners.
- We build a sense of community, speak collectively – ‘us’/‘our’, not ‘they’/‘them’.
- We promote patient empowerment and strive to remove paternalism.
- We promote inclusivity and encourage views from seldom heard groups.
- We are ambitious and when necessary innovate, test and improve. We imagine ideal solutions and are not restrained by the status quo or by self-imposed constraints.
- We keep oral and written language simple, avoid jargon and use language that everybody understands. We have a glossary when there are technical terms.
- We encourage contributions and views from all relevant Trust colleagues and stakeholders. As the Trust is very large, we can add value by bringing separate parts of the Trust together and enabling effective cross team working. When relevant we consider who from the Trust has not contributed and why not.
- We review, continuously learn and improve. We will seek feedback, reflect and make changes to improve the effectiveness of lay partner contributions as part of regular lay partner evaluation and monitoring that is facilitated by the Trust.

Commitment from Trust colleagues

To operate effectively we seek the following commitment from the Trust project leader:

- Be open and show visible commitment and understanding to co-production with patients, carers and the public.
- Be open to constructive challenge and show this during interactions and meetings.
- Share all information early so we can co-produce effectively.
- Invest time in building an effective working relationship. Have an introductory briefing, provide background information and any relevant training. For example take us on a visit to a relevant clinical site so we can understand issues and contribute effectively.
- Share papers in advance so we can prepare and focus on the discussion.
- Use clear, jargon-free language and be willing to explain technical issues.
- Respect our time and acknowledge the value of our involvement.
- Raise any issues or concerns immediately if they arise and seek a way forward.
- Reflect and take part in informal reviews to promote effective learning and continuous improvement. Always share positive examples of how lay partner involvement positively impacted a project when they arise.
- Be a good host. Offer appropriate refreshments or access to a kitchen and ensure meeting rooms are easy to access. If they are not, arrange a suitable meeting place.

For more information

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