

Staffed Wards Project

Meeting Notes 18th December 2026



Inclusion North, Researchers from The University of Leeds and The Involvement Leaders went to the meeting.

In the meeting we spoke about:

- What good staff are like
- What helps people feel safe and respected
- What not so good staff look like
- What needs to change



The Involvement Leaders



The Involvement Leaders are a group of people who have:

- A learning disability
- Are autistic
- Are a family carer



Involvement Leaders have experience of:

- Inpatient Mental Health Settings.
- Community Mental Health Support



The group helps make sure mental health services work better for people with a learning disability and autistic people in the North East and Cumbria.

Who are Inclusion North?



Courtney Cooper is a Innovation and Impact Manger



Joanna Routledge is a Project Worker



Joanna and and Courtney work for Inclusion North.



Inclusion North include people with a learning disability, autistic people, families, carers, the organisations that help them and communities in our work.



Inclusion Norths works across the North East, York and Humber regions.

Who Are The University of Leeds Researchers?



Katy Greenfield is a Research Assistant



Jo Lomani is a Co-Applicant and Patient and Public Involvement Lead



Kate and Jo work for Leeds University.

They are doing research on how how staff and ward environments affect people's safety on adult mental health wards.



They want to understand what helps keep people safe.

What does “good support” mean?



Good support helps people live their life and this includes:

- Getting out and about and going for walks



- Having things to do

- Feeling included, not stuck



- Staff who understands you and knows your likes and dislikes.



- Staff that help you with everyday life

What does “good support” mean?



Good support helps people live their life and this includes:

- Staff that are kind and caring, and treat you with dignity and respect



- Staff that listen then speak to you calmly.



- Staff that does not rush you and gives you time you need



- Staff that make you feel safe and comfortable
- Build trust over time

Relationships Matter



When staff know you well there can be less incidents and things feel less stressful, the ways to help with this are:

- Building relationships
- Getting to know you properly
- Understand your worries and triggers
- Know what helps you feel calm



Choice and Respect



People want choice which includes:

- Choosing male or female staff, especially for appointments
- Having privacy, like using the toilet on your own where possible
- Being treated as a person, not everyone the same



Blanket rules are not good and mean the following:

- Everyone is treated as unsafe
- Rules are the same for everyone
- People get upset and leads to incidents.



Time and Patience



Good examples are:

- Being patient
- Giving you time
- Not rushing you
- Waiting until you are okay
- Doing things **with** people
- Not doing things **to** people



Training and Support for Staff



Staff need to be trained in:

- Mental health
- Physical health
- Learning disabilities
- Autism



Staff also need support from their managers and need to be given enough time to read care plans and be on the wards.



If Staff are tired or overworked this causes care to be not as good and can lead to incidents happening.

Autism in Hospital



Some things are very hard for autistic people.

Problems often mentioned are:

- Handovers can be very stressful
- Noise and changes can cause distress
- Mixed wards do not always work well



Examples of good support includes:

- Understanding shutdowns and meltdowns
- Knowing that self-harm can be a way to show distress
- Making reasonable adjustments such as having information written down and in clear bullet-points.
- Being given a pen and paper for selective mutism



After Incidents



An incident is something unexpected that goes wrong and needs attention.

It might be someone being restrained, or a fight and when this happens:



- Staff usually get support and time to debrief.

- Staff talk to each other to understand what has happened.



- Patients are usually not allowed to talk to staff about it.

- Patient do not feel it's fair they are not allowed to talk about it.



Patients need time and support to talk about what happened and to feel safe again. Without this more incidents can happen

Complaints and Advocacy



Common problems with complaints are:

- Complaints are very hard to make
- It is confusing to understand how to make a complaint.
- People often give up



Examples of good support with complaints includes:

- Having someone to help you complain
- Having advocacy
- Being listened to without fear
- Some people do not have family or advocacy and this leaves them with no one to talk to.



Peer Support and Lived Experience

Peer support is very important as it includes:



- Peer workers, who are people who have lived experience and understand what it feels like to be in hospital.



- Trust made by Peer Workers.
- People want more peer workers and their lived experience to be valued and seen as important.

What is “not good” about Staffed Wards?



- There are too many restrictions.
- Not being listened to.
- Being labelled as “attention seeking”.
- Staff not knowing your needs.
- Staff being too busy or tired.
- Not enough staff on the ward.
- Mixed wards causing stress.
- Blanket rules after incidents.
- Not being told about meetings like Care and Treatment Reviews (CTRs).
- Not being asked for consent.

What people want to change about services



- Know them as individuals
- Respect their choices



- Support staff properly
- Reduce restrictions
- Listen before things escalate



The main message is **good care** is about doing **with** people, not **to** people.