

Talking Mental Health Summer Newsletter

Welcome to the joint Newsletter for
Independent Mental Health Network (IMHN)

and

Forum of Carers and People who Use SaBP NHS Services (FoCUS)

What we do

Engaging with service users and carers to hear their experiences of using Adult mental health services. We provide a voice for people in Surrey and North East Hampshire on the mental health topics that matter to them.

Hearing directly from people who use services really helps to highlight the challenges people face and has helped to make improvements. We regularly share and contribute at decision making meetings to help people that will require the services in the future.

Both IMHN and FoCUS have a network of individuals who have experienced mental ill-health, as well as carers. Together, they collaborate with the NHS and social care service providers to improve mental health care in Surrey and North East Hampshire. Their collective efforts aim to enhance services, advocate for better support, and create positive change.



Registered Charity Number:1206289

Company Limited by Guarantee, number 3298760.

Contact the team



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Dates

When	What	Where
Thursday 27th August 12:00 - 1.30pm	IMHN Listening Lunch	Online - Zoom
Friday 25th Sept 1:00-3:00pm	IMHN Coordinating meeting	Online - Zoom
21st October 2026 Time TBC	Celebrate Coproduction	Mandolay Hotel in Guildford

Wellbeing events

Discover simple, natural ways to support your health at our Kitchen Cupboard Remedies Workshop at St Paul's, Egham Hythe, Staines, on 24th August from 10:30am to 12:30pm, where you'll learn how everyday kitchen ingredients can be used for wellbeing and self care.

Join us for a restorative Forest Bathing session at Alice Holt on 27th August at 10:00am, and reconnect with nature through a mindful walk designed to reduce stress and boost wellbeing.

On Wednesday 2nd September we will be exploring the area around the Hogsmill again but this time we will be finding out about the area's link to the Pre-Raphaelite artists followed by a wallpaper printing activity back at Bourne Hall

Strengthen your wellbeing at our Immunity Workshop at Wraysbury Village Hall on 7th September from 10:30am to 12:30pm, where you'll learn how to use immune-supporting herbs and natural remedies to help maintain health and resilience throughout the year.

Join us for a guided tour of Alice Holt on 1st October at 11:00am, and explore the forest's fascinating history, wildlife, and beautiful woodland landscapes with an experienced guide.

We are also hoping to host a golf day in September, more details to follow. Please email Kirsty.Westrop@surreycoalition.org.uk if you are interested in attending any of the upcoming wellbeing events.

IMHN

Independent Mental Health Network

New chair and vice chair of IMHN

IMHN elections results

We recently held our yearly IMHN member elections for the voluntary roles of Chair and Vice Chair of the network. These positions help the Coordinator to set the agenda topics for meetings, facilitate discussions and raise members experience of services.

This year we had four candidates standing for election which was brilliant and thanks go out to David Muir, Carinder Mahli, Jacob Adams and Rachel Cocklin for putting themselves forward. I can confirm that Jacob Adams was successful for the role of Chair and Rachel Cocklin as Vice Chair. The positions begin in August 2026 until July 2027. Congratulations to them both!

Message from Jacob:



"Thank you for re-electing me as Chair! I look forward to working closely with our new vice-chair Rachel, as well as Guy and Immy and the wider team over the coming year.

I feel very fortunate to be a member of the IMHN; it's rare to find a community where people both actively share and apply their lived experience and have the opportunity to work directly with commissioners to improve care. I'm grateful for your trust in us to help lead and would like to say a big thank you to everyone for your continued involvement.

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Things are tough in the mental health world at the moment, and realistically there's unlikely to be a major shift within the next year. But - if we maintain the good relationships we have, continue to develop our offer for members and partners and, of course, grow our membership - we'll be doing all we can to shape mental health services in a positive direction."



Message from Rachel:

Thanks for voting me in as Vice-chair for the upcoming year. I am looking forward to getting more involved and working with Jacob to promote and develop the network.

Oakleaf/IMHN Yoga Wellbeing at Knowle Park Cranleigh

Blog by Piara's, IMHN member

I have been taking full advantage of the summer activities organised by the Independent Mental Health Network and Surrey Coalition this year in conjunction with a number of local partners like Oakleaf Enterprise.

One of my favourite events was Wellbeing in the Park where we had a yoga session in the cool shade under some trees at Knowle Park, Cranleigh.

Our instructor, was very down to earth, unhurried and witty in his approach and he expertly catered to the group's wide range of movement, ability and levels of experience.

I am going through a particularly challenging time in my life at the moment and struggling daily to stay mentally and physically well. Being surrounded by people who know and understand what it feels like and who I can talk to about my hopes and fears in a safe space is why I enjoy the wellbeing events so much."

Mental Health support available for neurodivergent people - early findings

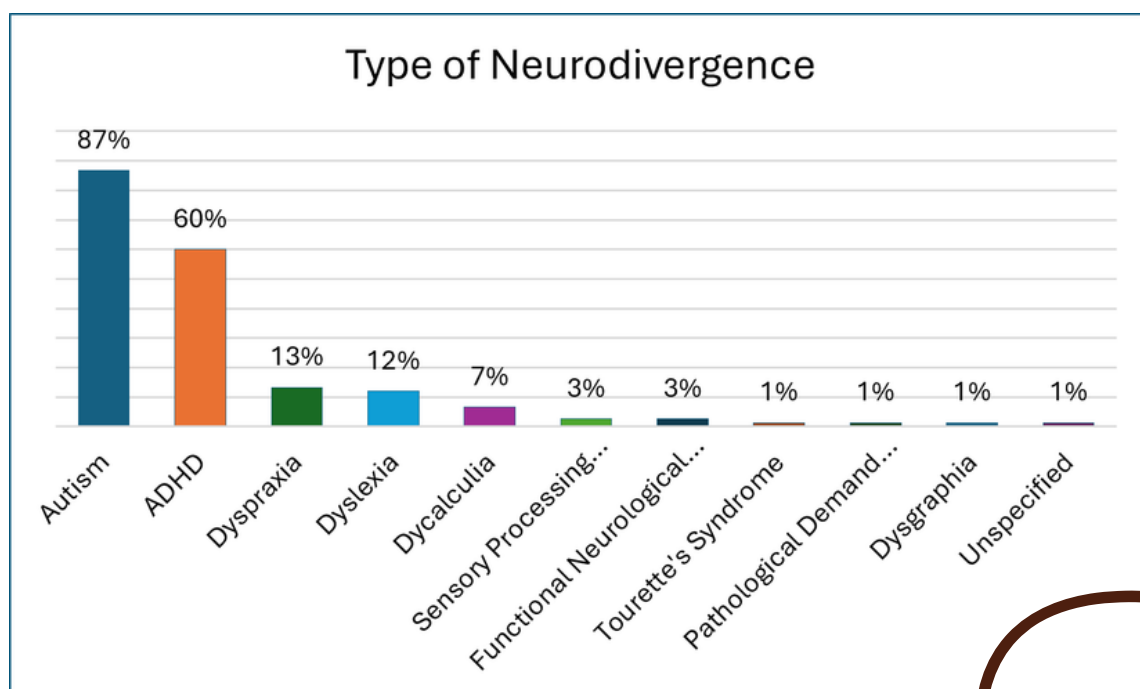
We wanted to understand more about the health support available for neurodivergent people.

75 neurodivergent people who have tried to access mental health services completed a survey during June and July to tell us about their experiences. We are still going through the results, but you can read some of our early findings here.

Some people had formal diagnoses, some were on waiting lists for an assessment, others were self-diagnosed or had been identified by a professional who was not a diagnostician. Most people listed more than one condition.

87% of respondents were Autistic, 60% have ADHD. Some people described themselves as AuDHD or Aud.

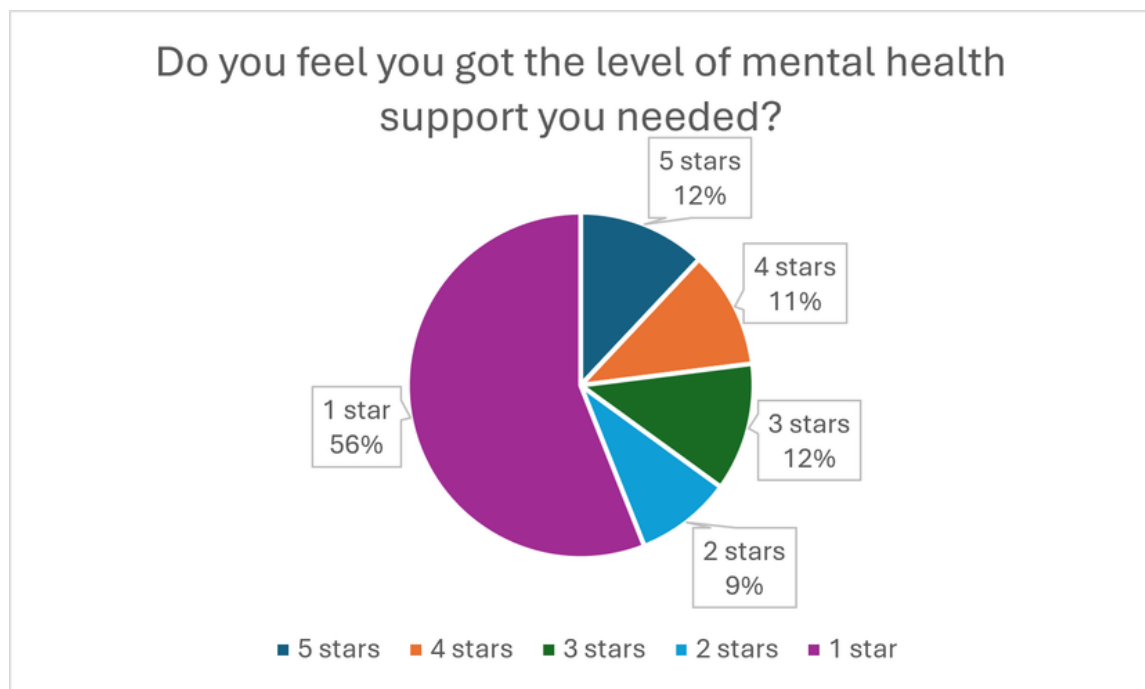
Other types of neurodivergence included Dyspraxia, Dyslexia, Dyscalculia and Dysgraphia, Sensory Processing Disorder, Functional Neurological Disorder, Tourette's Syndrome and Pathological Demand Avoidance.



60% of people had sought support for their mental health in the last 6 months, 20% between 6 months and 2 years ago, and 20% had not sought mental health support for more than two years.

We asked people if they felt they got the level of mental health support they needed in their most recent experience.

12% felt the support was very helpful, but 57% felt the support they received did not help. The average rating out of 5 stars was 2.12.



Most of the people who rated their support at 5 stars described having support from someone who is skilled and experienced at working with neurodivergent people, who understand their challenges, make reasonable adjustments for them, and provide consistent, long term support to help people understand themselves.

One had a supportive doctor who “made the link” between mental health and neurodivergence.

One has “weekly private, face to face counselling sessions with a neurodiversity informed therapist” and found it “life changing to get help processing and understanding my thoughts. It is SO helpful to speak to a therapist who I know and trust”. They had previously struggled to access support from the NHS due to long waiting lists, limited numbers of sessions, extreme anxiety, selective mutism and shutdowns at the end of appointments caused by difficulty with transitions.

One had weekly, followed by fortnightly sessions, and a therapist who "is extremely good at working with me to understand what parts of my struggle may be neurodivergence vs trauma/depression/anxiety and therefore suggest different ways for moving forwards in each example. This has made a huge difference".

One had very positive experiences with the National Autistic Society's one to one support, and with the Brain In Hand app.

One autistic person was receiving music therapy which meant they could express their distress through sound without needing to find the right words. They experience mutism and had previously been told by a GP nurse they were being "non-compliant" because they were non-verbal, and any further help was suspended "even though I was trying by writing down words".

They said reasonable adjustments by the music therapist had really helped in terms of:

- "Not made to be verbal
- Allowing me to write thoughts to be read
- Playing music to communicate in sound
- Not having to make eye contact
- Not having to do small talk"

People who felt the support they were provided did not help often report a lack of understanding of neurodivergence, long waiting lists, poor communication, and the absence of appropriate services meaning people "fall through the gaps", often due to the complexity of overlapping conditions.

"I wasn't "sick" enough for talking therapy"

"I didn't fit into any box so there was no support for me"

"It's like gambling with bad odds.

You have a 95% chance the person knows about autism, a 50% chance they know how to assist an autistic person, a 10% chance they care enough to help and an unknown variable of 'what can they offer'"

"Found some staff lacked empathy and on several occasions the way I was spoken to lacked compassion or kindness. They had very poor understanding of what it truly means to be neurodivergent using outdated language and clearly had only a very basic grasp. I was offered therapy that is actually often unhelpful for Autistic people esp (CBT) - I don't need the way I think, communicate etc to change or for someone to try to fix me."

"Staff had no understanding of Autistic burnout, and what helps with recovery. Many think it's depression but it isn't. They also had a very poor understanding of autistic meltdowns and what helps us to feel safe in ourselves and also no understanding of interoception and other sensory and emotional differences we can experience-such as experiencing alexithymia."

"Told on many occasions when I was in a great deal of distress to attend A&E! This is a place where there are a lot of people, noise, smells etc and when exhausted and distressed would be too triggering for an autistic person! Meltdowns which are essentially caused by things like sensory overload, too many demands, not feeling in control, being extremely overwhelmed, loss of executive function... In a meltdown I feel unsafe, overwhelmed, I can say and do things I am unaware of and might not be able to control myself and need calm support, co regulation, validation and kindness to help me feel safe again."

"6 sessions does not touch the surface of what is going on in relation to my mental wellbeing. The issues that I brought up and discussed at the sessions and the emotions that they bring about, etc. need to be looked at on a far longer basis. Autism and its effects on you are for life not just 6 months."

Look out for the full report coming this autumn.



RecoveryFest

The mental health team attended Recoveryfest in August, an event held in Stoke Park, Guildford by the Recovery College to help people on their recovery journey learn about other wellbeing support services available and connect with people with shared experiences. Many of our members have attended courses at the Recovery College and some have even taught them!

Despite incredibly strong winds there was a good turn out - Immy and Guy had to hold on to their tent at all times and leaflets were flying around the park as staff chased them.

There were approximately 20 organisations in attendance including Waythrough, Action for Carers, Sport in Mind, Surrey Sports Park and of course The Recovery College. Guildford MP, Zoe Franklin, even stopped by to talk to exhibitors. It was lovely to have a couple of our members there also to chat with people interested in the IMHN.

IMHN/Action for Carers Coffee Morning

The IMHN teamed up with Action for Carers to host a coffee morning on the 13th August at The Boathouse, Guildford. A lovely location which allowed the group to sit on the deck in the shade down by the river Wey.

Despite the ongoing heatwave, fourteen people came along enjoying a relaxed morning of coffee and drinks by the river watching the swans go by and waving at the canal boats as they passed.

Our thanks go out to Action for Carers staff member Victoria for chatting with members about their caring roles and support available as well as encouraging four Action for Carers members to come along and join us. It was a lovely opportunity to meet new people and have a catch up.



David's Sponsored Swim

David Muir's sponsored swim on 6th August took place at Camberley Leisure Centre and despite only having an hour he managed to swim 15 lengths and was cheered on by IMHN members and IMHN Coordinator Guy Hill.

Listening Lunch

Jacob & Rachel hope you will join them online for the next IMHN Listening Lunch session on Thursday 27th August online from Noon until 1.30pm.

It's an open drop in to come along and share recent experiences of mental health support as well as an opportunity for members to have a chat with our new Chair and Vice Chair.

Please contact Guy Hill for log in details by email guy.hill@surreycoalition.org.uk or SMS txt 07305009869.

A colorful poster for a 'Listening Lunch' session. It features a blue and orange background with white text boxes and icons. At the top, the title 'Listening Lunch' is in a white box with a fork and spoon icon. Below it, a larger white box describes the session as an open, supportive space for IMHN members and the team. A section titled 'What to expect:' lists three bullet points: informal chats, opportunities to ask questions, and a chance to connect with other members. To the right of this list is a 2x2 grid of four cartoon illustrations of diverse people. At the bottom, two white boxes provide the date and time (Thursday 27th August, 12:00 - 1.30pm) and contact information for Guy Hill (email and SMS/txt).

Listening Lunch

Join our Listening Lunch Zoom session for an open, supportive space to connect, chat, and share ideas with fellow IMHN members and the IMHN team.

What to expect:

- Informal chats in a relaxed and supportive space
- Opportunities to ask questions, share feedback, and discuss ideas
- A chance to connect with other members and talk about projects and activities

Join our next Listening Lunch on Thursday 27th August 12:00 - 1.30pm

To join please contact Guy: guy.hill@surreycoalition.org.uk or SMS/txt 07305009869



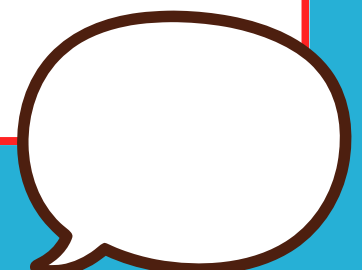
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Wendy winning Gold

Wendy Smith has won an award for her work with Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. Wendy was presented with the Gold award for Involvement and Contribution at Surrey and Border's Staff Awards.

As part of the Coalition's mental health team, Wendy has spent the last four and a half years helping Surrey and Borders understand what matters most to people with lived experience of using mental health services, their families and carers. During the development of Silverwood, Surrey's new inpatient service in Chertsey, Wendy represented the voices of people with lived experience when decisions were being made. Many of Silverwood's design features were shaped by the experiences and opinions that people generously shared with Wendy, to ensure the needs of a wide spectrum of people could be understood by the design team. People were kept up to date on the latest developments and asked their opinions on other decisions during the Lived Experience Group meetings which Wendy co-chaired.



Alongside the Silverwood project, Wendy has worked on the Community Mental Health Transformation Programme, and the development of new Integrated Neighbourhood Mental Health Teams. Hundreds of people shared their views with Wendy and the project team about the barriers to accessing mental health services in the community and how that could be improved. Wendy said she was pleasantly surprised to be nominated for the award for Involvement and Contribution, stunned to be shortlisted, and astounded to win the Gold Award. She said, "I feel the award is not about me, but about recognising the importance of meaningfully involving people with lived experience in designing, developing and delivering services which they or their loved ones use."

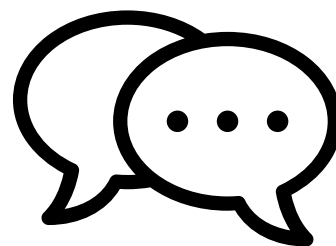


FoCUS

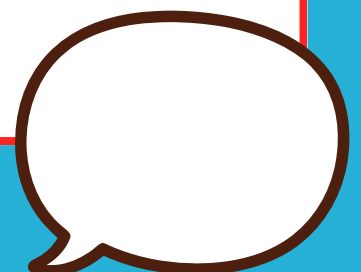
Over recent months, several themes have come through from discussions with our community.

- The use of AI tools such as Chat GPT and befriending apps as self-therapy by people on waiting lists for services.
- Hospital discharge and supported housing delays.
- Is there a gap in community support – how will the new neighbourhood teams address this and will this lead to more change for individuals using services?
- Experiences of a mum who is a carer and the challenges she faces when her loved one is an inpatient.
- Further experiences of Health Based Place of Safety assessments and inpatient stay at Farnham Road Hospital.
- Ensuring best practice for carers is embedded in every policy and how to monitor these.
- FoCUS would like to know the status of the Triangle of Care across services and if there's an action plan and next steps for the Carers' Strategy.

We want to hear from you!



If you have had experience with any of the topics mentioned above, or if there's something you'd like to share, please get in touch. We'd love to hear your thoughts. Everything you share, both positive and negative helps us to improve mental health services.



Get Involved in Coproduction

Help develop Trauma-Informed e-Learning

We are creating an e-learning course about trauma-informed approaches for staff at Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SABP) and partner organisations.

The training will explain: what trauma is; how trauma can affect people; what trauma-informed practice means; and how trauma-informed practice can support people who have experienced trauma.

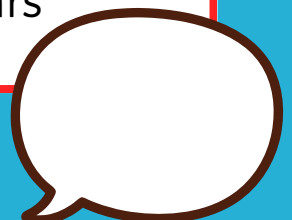
E-learning is online training that can be completed on a computer, tablet, or phone. Staff can access it at any time and learn at their own pace.

SABP staff work with adults, young people, and children in a range of services, including community mental health, crisis, and inpatient settings.

Who can take part?

To make sure the training includes different perspectives, we are looking for:

- People who have used SABP services in the last 5 years
- Family members or carers of someone who has used an SABP service in the last 5 years
- Staff who have worked for SABP in the last 5 years



People should also:

- Have personal experience of trauma. You do not need a diagnosis, and you will not be asked to share details about your trauma.
- Feel comfortable reading and hearing about trauma
- Feel comfortable sharing what was helpful or unhelpful when accessing mental health services or support

Knowing about trauma-informed approaches is helpful, but not necessary to take part.

What will it involve?

People will review the e-learning and suggest where their lived-experience could be included to improve the content and make it more meaningful and relevant.

We expect this involvement to take around 2 hours per week for 12 weeks.

Reimbursement is available for your contribution.

How to get involved?

To register your interest fill out our [form](#). Places are limited and this opportunity closes at midnight 23 August 2026.

If you have any questions, please contact Nicola Rushent (Lived Experience Trauma-Informed Lead) :

nicola.rushent@sabp.nhs.uk



FoCUS News

New FoCUS Coordinator

We are delighted to announce the appointment of Wendy Smith as the new FoCUS Involvement Coordinator.

Starting in September, she will continue the work Jennie Coulson had started to engage more SABP service users and carers in sharing their experiences with the Trust to create improvements where necessary, and replicate areas of excellence.

We are confident that her background working in both the Coalition and SABP on high level coproduction projects, such as Silverwood Hospital design and delivery, will provide her with the skills she needs to succeed in this new role.



Wendy said "I have been lucky enough to spend the last 4 years working with people to understand their priorities for mental health services in both community and inpatient environments, and ensuring Surrey and Borders take these views and experiences into account."

Colette Lane, Professional Lead for Lived Experience Development at SABP has worked closely with Wendy over the last 3 years. Colette said "Wendy has led vital work in the Community Transformation Project, ensuring the voices of people who use services, carers and families are genuinely heard.

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Her compassion, integrity and commitment to co-production inspire others and keep lived experience at the heart of change. Wendy consistently makes a difference through her ability to build trust and engage people in honest, open conversations. She creates safe, inclusive spaces where people who use services, carers and families feel able to share candid feedback.

Wendy then clearly and thoughtfully feeds this insight back to SABP, directly influencing service design decisions. As a result, proposed changes have been more responsive, inclusive and grounded in real experience, strengthening both the quality and credibility of the Community Transformation Project."

Congratulations Wendy, we look forward to working with you going forwards!

SABP News

Improving care for people taking clozapine

SABP recently undertook a Quality Improvement project in their North East Hants Community Mental Health Recovery Service (CMHRS) team as well as the clozapine clinic team at Aldershot Centre for Health, which has been published in MDPI, an international peer-reviewed journal.

The project, led by Balazs Adam, Advanced Specialist Clinical Pharmacist and Osama Ayad, Specialty Doctor, focused on improving the detection and management of Clozapine-Induced Gastrointestinal Hypomotility (CIGH) in community mental health services. Clozapine is a second-generation antipsychotic licensed for refractory schizophrenia and psychosis in Parkinson's disease.

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CIGH is one of the most common and serious adverse effects of clozapine, with a reported case-mortality rate of 18%. While guidance on the monitoring and management of this condition is readily available based on observational studies conducted with inpatients, there are no widely adopted guidelines for use in the outpatient setting.

This paper discusses the development of a new approach and clinical tool to raise awareness of this issue and to improve identification and proactive management in community mental health services.

Following its publication, other NHS Trusts have expressed an interest in this important work. The team hopes that the problem of CIGH continues to be recognised and prioritised so that all people taking clozapine can be provided with the best up-to-date evidence-based treatment options.

To view the article, please [visit the MPDI website](#).

Appeal to support recovery through nature

The Trust is appealing for public support to help people who use mental health services at Farnham Road Hospital, Guildford, to benefit from the therapeutic power of nature.

Green Roots to Recovery, uses gardening and outdoor activities to support mental health recovery, wellbeing and confidence.

Donations will fund tools, plants and materials for patients to use in ward gardens and outdoor spaces, helping to reduce stress, build confidence and encourage recovery through meaningful activity.

The initiatives aim to create welcoming outdoor spaces where people can connect with nature, take part in meaningful activities and support their recovery journey.

Green Roots to Recovery will support people receiving care on Mulberry and Magnolia wards, inpatient mental health wards for adults aged 18-65. You can donate to Green Roots to Recovery on [JustGiving](#).

"Gardening can have a hugely positive impact on mental health, confidence and recovery. We hope this project will create a lasting therapeutic environment that supports the wellbeing of both the people using our services and colleagues."

One patient involved in the project said: "This has been a refreshing change from the usual activities on the ward and has given me the chance to learn new skills while spending time outdoors."

"I've enjoyed helping to shape plans for the garden and seeing the progress being made. It's rewarding to contribute ideas and be part of something that will benefit others."

Another patient said: "The gardening has helped my wellbeing enormously. It has motivated me to do something every day."



FoCUS Database updates

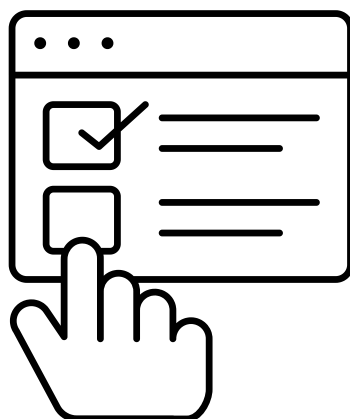
We are continuing to update the information we hold about our members, making sure contact information we have such as email addresses and phone numbers are up to date, and adding some demographic information so we can better understand who FoCUS is currently reaching and which communities we may need to do some work to engage with and raise awareness of FoCUS.

Thank you to all who have already been in touch to update your details. If you still need to please fill in the form linked below, it should take around 5 minutes. If you are not a member of FoCUS you can also use the forms below to sign up.

FoCUS Members update form - [FoCUS Membership Joining and Update Form – Fill in form](#)

Professionals update form - [FoCUS form for Professionals – Fill in form](#)

Thank you for helping us keep our records up to date, it helps us to support our members more effectively.



Talk & Learn Session – SABP Carers Strategy

Join us for our next Talk & Learn group on 9th September, 12:30 – 2:30pm at Addlestone Community Centre.

At this session, we'll hear from the Carers lead at Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust about their new carers strategy – what is it, how it's used and how they turn a strategy into the daily running of Trust services.

We will also be discussing how people are using AI in their daily lives to help their wellbeing. If you have any experience of this please do come along.

The session is aimed as service users, carers and professionals who

- Want to learn more about the trust's plans for carers.
- Hear directly from the Trust about current and upcoming work and developments
- Ask questions directly to the people who created the strategy
- Share experiences of being a carer of someone using mental health services in Surrey and North East Hampshire.

Your voice matters. This is a great opportunity to learn, ask questions and help shape the conversations about mental health services in our area.

Location: Addlestone Community Centre, Colin Gaskin Room, Garfield Road, KT15 2NJ

Date: 9th September

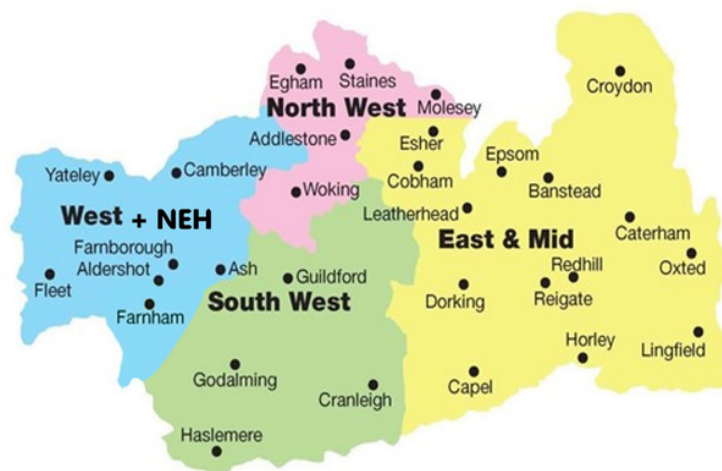
Time: 12:30 – 2:30pm

Please contact Lucy (lucy@lf-solutions.co.uk) to find out more, or get help with transport.

Who can come to FoCUS?

Anyone that has used or cared for someone that has used Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Trust adult mental health services.

Contact the FoCUS Support team to attend a group or find out more!



Can't make a meeting? Use our online survey

If you're not able to join the FoCUS meeting we'd still love to hear about your experiences using Surrey and Borders NHS Foundation Trust services.

You can share your experiences by filling out our 'share your experience' form which also includes our optional question of the quarter.

You can access the form using this link or QR code

<https://forms.office.com/e/89UNwe7u>

[gn](https://forms.office.com/e/89UNwe7u)

Share your experiences of mental health services in Surrey and North East Hampshire



You can also email us at
focus@surreycoalition.org.uk

Wellbeing Support

Do you need mental health support?

The Safe Havens in Surrey remain open for people in crisis to visit in person every day of the year. You can find out more information here:

[https://www.sabp.nhs.uk/our-services/mental-health/safe-havens.](https://www.sabp.nhs.uk/our-services/mental-health/safe-havens)

Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SABP) and the Community Connections providers have launched virtual Safe Havens. The Virtual Safe Havens are open from 6.00pm to 11.00pm every day of the year for people in crisis.

Virtual Safe Haven Links

- [Epsom Safe Haven](http://nhs.vc/sabp/safe-haven-Epsom)
- [Guildford Safe Haven](https://nhs.vc/sabp/safe-haven-guildford)
- [Redhill Safe Haven](https://nhs.vc/sabp/safe-haven-redhill)
- [Woking Safe Haven](https://nhs.vc/sabp/safe-haven-woking)
- [Aldershot Safe Haven](https://nhs.vc/sabp/safe-haven-aldershot)

Other sources of support

- call Surrey and Borders' Mental Health Crisis Helpline on: 0800 915 4644 or by SMS text: 07717 989 024
- contact SHOUT by SMS text on 85258
- contact Samaritans on 116 123 or email them at jo@samaritans.org
- [go to the Healthy Surrey website for more information about mental health and emotional wellbeing support in Surrey.](#)

Shape mental health and SABP services across Surrey and North East Hampshire from your lived experience.

“FoCUS feels like you are being heard by people who care.”
- FoCUS Member



Join and become a member for free!



Work with others to improve support and care in your community



Have your voice heard – improve services together

SCAN ME

