

Culture of Care: Staff Care & Development Ward Improvement Projects

The Culture of Care: Staff Care & Development Programme has worked with 173 inpatient mental health wards across 58 organisations, from September 2024 to February 2026. While working with us, wards have further developed team cultures and systems so that people on the ward felt safe and cared for.

A small team on each ward co-produced, planned and ran an improvement project focused on staff care and development. The purpose of this public list is to share ideas for improving staff care and development with other organisations and wards who are interested in making similar changes. All the ideas below were generated by wards themselves as part of our coaching approach.

We have grouped the projects by improvement theme in the list below:

- Activities
- Carers
- Co-production
- Communication
- Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
- Reflective Practice
- Support for Staff (including staff wellbeing)
- Team Dynamics
- Therapeutic Relationships

Activities

Activities Improvement projects

Project goal: creating more fun and togetherness on the ward. The team aimed to improve engagement in activities and support for staff and service users.

Project description: During the programme, the ward:

- Started a current affairs group
- Planned a summer party for the whole ward
- Started a therapeutic support group for patients and carers
- Planned a staff away day

Project goal: how can we strengthen feelings of joy and inclusion on the ward, while also developing relationships with newer staff members, and building therapeutic relationships with service users?

Project description: The ward developed a programme to run low-key activities after each meal or snack period. They also put together a business case and funding proposal for their purchase of a games console and games and a storage box so all activity-related materials would be organised in one place.

Impact: The team administered a survey and the service users and staff said they strongly agreed that the activities (quiz games, board games, conversation starters) had worked well. Service users noted that card games and quiz games were most popular.

Project goal: to increase the number of hours of activities on the ward and the level of engagement with activities. This was chosen because the staff felt that the toughest challenge on the ward for them was responding to a high number of incidents. The ward team expected that increasing activities would reduce incidents.

Project description: The team brought in an additional team member to run more activities out of hours. The OT also worked with the team to put on more activities service users requested (e.g. mindfulness) and more activities that could be done without a staff member present (activity boxes). The team came up with a plan to increase activities week on week in a staggered way.

The ward successfully increased activities during the programme, implementing a new timetable with many more hours of activities per week.

Project goal: How can we strengthen staff teamwork and relationships, and help staff, especially healthcare assistants, share and build their skills to increase engagement and a sense that their work is meaningful to them?

Project description: The ward has implemented a "Handprints" poster that all staff and service users contribute to by sharing fun facts, likes, dislikes, etc. This will be continually updated as new staff and service users join the ward. The team also developed and implemented an activities programme, in which staff share skills with service users, and service users share their skills with staff. This helps build engagement and community on the ward, and it improves therapeutic relationships. It also prepares service users for their return home by helping them refresh their skills and develop hobbies.

Impact: The projects have given the ward an injection of ideas and energy. Learning from each other through the activities is helping them strengthen bonds among the staff and service users, and it's creating a feeling of community on the ward. The ward team has also noticed that even though they've been short-staffed, everyone is pitching in and helping each other to do things they normally don't do. The handprints "tree" is helping people to feel included as part of the Ilkley community, and everyone wants to take part in it. Knowing each other's likes and dislikes also helps with teamwork and building therapeutic relationships with service users.

Project description: Empowering the nursing team to proactively run activities for patients through 1) daily huddles with patients to plan activities and 2) resources from OT team

Project description: Increasing support for the nursing team to set up flexible, low resource, patient-requested activities to run consistently

Project description: Embedding more formal and informal activities on the ward

Project description: Delivering a varied and personalised schedule of activities for all patients through 1) inclusion in shift planning process 2) developing a rota of activities 3) empowering staff to arrange their own 4) creating weekly planners for each patient on daily activities

Project description: Focusing on making all staff feel more comfortable to run activities with patients at any time of the day, not just in activity time

Carers

Carers Improvement projects
Project description: Improving relationships with carers through providing "induction" information and setting up a drop-in Carers Cafe
Project description: Setting up a Carers Group and implementing staff huddles on a regular basis
Project description: Improving support for carers through 1) providing training to support workers in speaking with carers; 2) creating "This is Me" documents with carer input; and 3) updating the visitors' room

Co-production

Improvement projects
Project description: Incorporating feedback from staff, service users and carers into the service design
Project description: Introducing a new peer support worker, setting up a peer support patient group and upskilling staff with peer support approaches

Communication

Communication improvement projects
Project goal: to achieve better and more professional communication between staff, specifically different staff groups.
Project description: The team has held a Band 3 away day, a Band 5 away day and a combined away day. They have shared the Culture of Care standards and the objectives of the project. They have asked for ideas from the team and have set up a monthly meeting with an idea / suggestion box to set up the agenda. The team had positive results with really good engagement from all staff groups. The team were keen to move forward with a weekly communication meeting which will be chaired by different staff each time.

Communication improvement projects

Project goal: to improve communication and support for colleagues on the ward, in order to help with teamwork and encourage everyone to pull together on each shift.

Project description: The team created a board in the nurses' station that captured the tasks for the day and who was allocated to what at the start of every shift more clearly. The board will also show an emoji / RAG mood status for everyone in the team that day. This will support a conversation at the start and end of each shift about how everyone is feeling and help identify any issues or concerns related to the shift.

The team also agreed to start proactively offering more positive feedback and gratitude to colleagues on the ward, as part of spreading a positive culture of care.

Impact: The team shared that the new tasks board has already helped with organisation and communication. Proactively offering more positive feedback has also shifted culture in a positive way.

Project goal: Improving communication within the team.

Project description: Gathered feedback from staff using a "communication tree" on ward, collected themes using PDSA cycle, focused on ensuring messages passed on by creating a communication book, and created a WhatsApp group.

Impact: Personal reflections now taking place and sometimes shared on ward. Strong uptake of WhatsApp group. Slower but steady uptake of communication book.

Project goal: to improve the safety and communication surrounding the admission of new patients onto the ward, improve staff wellbeing and communication, and enhance activities available on the ward for patients.

Project description: The team conducted a multi-faceted project approach to meet these aims:

- Created a draft values based admissions form which the team will use to gain information which will enhance their ability to support new admissions. As most admissions come via prison there is a lot of history in the files but little in the way of coping strategies, likes/dislikes, strengths and triggers that is information that could be beneficial to the service users care.
- Created a visual staff daily check in board using a traffic light system and having discussions around individual support mechanisms when displaying red/amber.
- Re-introduced staff communications book to improve staff communication across the ward. This is used at handover every morning.
- Worked with service users to plan and increase frequency of activities e.g. cooking and baking activities.

Communication improvement projects

Impact: So far, these initiatives have helped improve safety for staff and service users, improved communication between ward staff and enhanced staff and service users wellbeing.

Project goal: to improve communication to increase respect among all roles involved in the MDT.

Project description: Multiple projects implemented to focus on this: 1) including HCAs in MDT meetings with a rotating staff participant to involve everyone over time; 2) staff away days every other month where participants learn about each other's roles; 3) reflective practice bi-monthly; 4) questionnaires to understand team perspectives on working relationships.

Impact: So far, staff are affirming the projects; staff are happy to be invited to the MDT meeting; they are feeling heard, valued, and included. The projects are broadening and deepening communication across care teams (through increased attendance at ward rounds, broader representation from all MDT roles) and people are now attending without prompting).

Project goal: to involve frontline staff in MDT meetings and improve ward communication.

Project description: To address this aim, the team plan to:

- Involve qualified nurses and HCAs in MDT meetings.
- Create monthly nurse forums and HCA forums, to meet together to go through learning, safety planning and offer each other peer support.
- Implement daily staffing huddles (three a day), aiming to improve psychological safety between staff. Topics to discuss include support required after ward incidents, and including 'positive reflections' at the end of the shift.
- Promote weekly reflections - paused previously following a traumatic incident and staff focusing on tasks, and attendance at reflective practice.
- Staff to share with others around their culture or heritage, to help everyone be respectful of differences and get to know each other better.

Impact: The team are currently identifying which of this list of initiatives are a priority.

Project goal: to enable HCAs to work collaboratively with nurses in delivering patient care, contributing to decision-making and interventions, to improve patient care while enhancing feelings of value and belonging among the ward staff team.

Project description: To achieve this, the team:

- Re-designed the nursing whiteboard to become a "Ward Team" at-a-glance information board. This includes all essential 'need to know' information for each patient, and are used daily at handovers. The whiteboard is outlined with flags representing the countries of origin of all ward staff, to represent the ward staff and patient team as a whole.

Communication improvement projects

- Re-structured patient care teams so that individual staff members are now allocated to be more involved in the care of specific patients, based on existing therapeutic relationships.
- Created additional “at-a-glance” visual tools, including a diary, staffing information and safeguarding updates. These are updated daily by team members and have been helpful during handovers.
- HCAs started attending MDT ward rounds, with plans to include them in other patient discussion meetings in the near future.
- Introduced a “theme of the month” to enhance patient care on the ward, for example focusing on bedrooms and personal clothing/footwear in preparation for seasonal changes.

Impact: So far, the at-a-glance board has received very positive feedback from ward staff and visitors from other wards, who have recognised it as a valuable resource. Staff members who are allocated to particular patients have developed a greater understanding of those patients’ needs and are contributing more actively to their care, demonstrating increased ownership. Staff input during ward rounds and other patient meetings has also been invaluable in supporting patient care.

Project goal: to simplify the wards shift allocation sheet (the document used to plan roles and responsibilities for each shift). This aimed to improve communication and efficiency across the team, and streamline and simplify previously over complicated processes. With any time-efficiency savings the team hoped to enable more face-to-face patient time.

Project description: The team gathered feedback from all ward staff on what was and was not working well with the existing Allocation Sheet, and how this could be improved. This feedback was used to co-design a new allocation sheet. The revised sheet was trialled on shift, with real-time feedback collected and timely amendments made to ensure it met the team’s needs. The final version of the document was then implemented and utilised routinely for every shift, with feedback continuing to be gathered at regular intervals.

Impact: The team now has greater clarity around staff’s roles and responsibilities, leading to improved teamwork, communication and processes on each shift. Patient feedback has been positive, with staff able to spend more face-to-face time with patients, due to the time efficiency savings made. Both staff and patients report feeling more listened to, setting a strong foundation for ongoing improvement on the ward. The team now also plans to review other complex processes to review how they might be simplified in a similar manner moving forwards.

Project goal: improving team communication and safety via the safety huddle.

Project description: The team wanted to improve the design of the safety huddle process and DASA (Dynamic Appraisal of Situational Aggression) form on Marina Ward to support consistent implementation at the start of each shift, so that all staff feel safe going onto that shift. They designed and implemented a new DASA form and plan to iterate it based on feedback from their colleagues.

Communication improvement projects

Impact: The project is at an early stage; staff have implemented the new DASA form and will trial the impact.

Project goal: to create a culture of psychological safety and communication.

Project description: The team identified the need to improve communication across the whole team. This includes identifying ways to remove fear of blame, and create an environment based on learning from actions rather than allocating blame. The team were also keen to look at involving all staff roles in MDT meetings to enable decision making across the team.

Impact: The project is at an early stage, with the team currently gathering data.

Project goal: provide enhanced support for staff, enhance empathy and communication on the ward.

Project description: The team are looking into the following:

- Implement regular team meetings: These meetings provide a structured platform for staff to share updates, discuss challenges, and express their perspectives.
- Encourage open communication channels: Establish clear communication protocols, such as designated communication platforms or regular informal check-ins, to facilitate easy and accessible interactions among staff members.
- Provide empathy training: Offer workshops or training sessions focused on emotional intelligence, active listening, and understanding diverse perspectives.
- Create a safe space for feedback: Establish a process for staff to anonymously provide feedback on communication styles, workplace dynamics, or areas for improvement.
- Lead by example: Managers and supervisors should model empathetic and kind communication behaviors in their interactions with staff and patients.

Project goal: improving feedback when issues are raised or improvements are undertaken including closing the loop back to the reporting party.

Project description: The team have undertaken a journey of exploring how people would like to receive feedback following raising concerns / wishes or information on the ward. They are looking to develop a process that supports this happening at all times on the ward. The team made amendments to ward meetings to include a wider range of staff and also changed who meeting notes are shared with to create more transparency across the workforce.

Project goal: to improve communication on the ward.

Project description: The team are in the early stages of planning and would like to improve both written and verbal communication on the ward. They are going to look into whether they can arrange protected time to read and respond to emails each day, and are encouraging use of the ward diary for important reminders.

Communication improvement projects

Project description: The project focused on defining communication that works for the ward: creating principles, establishing standards, and using ward rounds, handovers and team meetings to apply these principles.

Impact: So far, the ward has their communication principles documented and standards established. Communication of both has started. A weekly meeting has been established to expand these to handovers and ward rounds.

Project description: Improving communication within the team by 1) ensuring everyone has up to date information; and 2) designing a new system to capture and share notes, combining electronic notes and whiteboard notes

Project description: Improving team communication to ensure all staff have up to date information through implementing a live handover document

Project description: Improving ward round notes and handovers to increase consistency and improve staff communication

Project description: Improving communication among staff through 1) a new conflict-resolution process; and 2) using the staff mailing list and the communication book

Project description: Improving ward rounds to ensure HCAs can contribute more, service users feel less daunted going into ward rounds, and ensuring that HCAs get a handover/debrief update afterwards

Project description: Recording conversations between staff and patients using Dialog+ to communicate better among staff and ensure a shared understanding of patient needs

Project description: More collaborative care planning via updating how ward rounds are carried out

Project description: Enhancing communication and strengthening relationships between support workers and MDT members

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Improvement projects

Project goal: the ward aimed to be ‘actively anti-racist’ and improve staff wellbeing. This project focused on tackling racism from patients and being more culturally aware as a team.

Project description: The ward recognised that at any one time, they had one or more patients who could be racially abusive. They felt that this behaviour was often not treated with the same seriousness as sexual or physical assaults within the Trust. There was also a lack of understanding about staff cultural backgrounds. The team felt this could be improved further. The ward took the following steps while part of the programme:

- Raising Awareness of the Project – They developed and implemented a communication strategy to inform and engage all staff i.e. business meeting
- Established a Baseline - They designed and distributed a staff survey to assess current attitudes, awareness, and engagement levels. They then sat and reviewed these themes together as a team.
- Encourage Staff Engagement - They created visually engaging posters and materials to promote the project and encourage team buy-in.
- Staff Workshop Planning - They created an Initial plan for a training session.
- Away Day Planning - They have organised an Away Day aligned with the Culture of Care project which includes interactive elements such as “Tree of Life” and “Kindness” activities with a Guest Speaker.
- Reviewed Incident Data - They have analysed and presented a summary of incident forms related to racial abuse submitted over the past 6 months to inform project direction.

Project goal: to offer support for staff suffering from incidents of racial abuse and provide them a safe space with which to share their experiences.

Project description: The team worked on creating a peer support team for staff, among the staff base, which staff can go to in order to talk about incidences of racial abuse.

There will be four peer support staff in total, from different job roles and there will be one available on every shift pattern. While it is not the responsibility of these staff members to solve problems on the ward, these are people who can provide a safe space for immediate report, and help the affected team member decide how they want to move forward. They can support the team member in going to the ward manager, or signpost them to organisational champions as appropriate. At the end of each month, the ward manager will have a clear picture of how many incidences of abuse have occurred.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Improvement projects

These peer support staff will also need to have support in place, and the team will ask them what they need and set up regular check-ins, additional supervisions and review the impact of the new role on them at monthly intervals.

Project goal: How can the members of staff work together to foster anti-racism to develop a more positive ward environment where all team members feel valued, supported, and a greater sense of wellbeing? This would help each team member strengthen their voice in speaking up to racism and would offer dedicated time to focus on individual wellbeing.

Project description: The ward focused on three project areas: 1) An anti-racism poster that staff would facilitate service users to create; 2) anti-racism training for service users and staff; and 3) weekly wellbeing break programme.

Impact: The ward staff have created their own anti-racism poster and slide show and they have been circulated and discussed to support building confidence in speaking up to racism from patients and supporting staff affected by racism.

Project goal: to improve support for staff through the response to incidents of racism or homophobic abuse by improving how these are addressed and followed up.

Project description: The ward team established that many ward staff felt the response and support following incidents of racism or homophobic abuse on the ward was insufficient, with a lack of confidence in the follow up process, including in police responses to such incidents. In consultation with the wider ward team they have taken a number of actions including: discussing and providing feedback on a trust-wide letter which will be sent to patients following incidents, putting up anti-racism posters on the ward and arranging for the centre's police liaison officer to come to the ward for their STAR day to answer a set of questions, co-designed by ward staff. They plan to introduce a staff board highlighting support processes, to discuss anti-racism in their community meetings with service users, and to set up team meetings to discuss further actions. They will also aim to check in 1:1 with staff who have experienced racist abuse, viewing it as everyone's role to do this. They are being supported by their sponsors moving forward.

Impact: So far, staff have reported feeling more supported by their colleagues and managers following racist incidents while at work.

Project goal: reduce racism from patients towards staff.

Project description: The ward created a multicultural / anti-racism board to help engage patients with a better understanding of people's cultures. The information will also be incorporated into the ward's induction pack.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Improvement projects

Project goal: building greater trust with one another and strengthening team members' feelings of belonging and inclusion. It also focused on strengthening therapeutic relationships with patients so they feel the staff are consistently present and responsive to their needs.

Project description: Steps the team took while on the programme:

- Developed and planned to implement an activities schedule for the lounge to engage staff and mums & babies. Activities included baby books that mums would make with a peer support worker.
- Took cultural humility and perinatal-focused cultural intelligence courses to build their knowledge and skills in how best to work with mums from various ethnic backgrounds.
- Developed a list of activities to implement. The team planned to train HCAs and nursery nurses on the activities so they can lead them. The team also submitted a resource request to obtain funds to purchase materials for baby books and other activities.
- Booked in cultural training.

Project goal: focus on staff getting to know each other better, focussing on cultural differences, hobbies, likes and dislikes. The team were also keen to improve support received following incidents of racism towards staff.

Project description: the team has created a 'Getting to Know You' Board. Staff have created bio's and the team are creating a board space. Staff have enjoyed learning more about each other in this part of the project. In terms of support after racial abuse incidents, three sessions of anti-racism staff training have been planned.

Project goal: Bringing the team together through sharing knowledge of our cultures and celebrating each other.

Project description: To achieve this, the ward worked on increasing awareness of EDI and training through the use of a board specifically designed to share information with both service users and staff.

Project description: Understanding the causes of challenging dynamics in order to build a positive, anti-racist message and cohesion as one team

Project description: De-normalising racism from patients and supporting staff after incidents through whole team conversations, and development of an incident response flow chart (including role of incident observers)

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Improvement projects

Project description: Improving how the ward support staff experiencing racist abuse from patients - via educational training, reporting of incidents and support for staff after incidents

Project description: Building cultural awareness, staff confidence in being curious about different cultures, and the ward's ability to meet cultural needs, through monthly staff-run and -researched events for patients, marking different cultural celebrations

Project description: Improve staff awareness, knowledge, and understanding of how to support patients who are neurodiverse, and improve resources on the ward for patients who are neurodiverse

Also ran other shorter improvement initiatives on making religious texts available on the ward, doing "This is me" profiles with patients to improve activities, and improving supervision

Project description: Creating a shared set of ward commitments around staff values, and setting up a Culture Week for staff to share more about their backgrounds

Reflective Practice

Reflective Practice improvement projects

Project goal: to create more protected time for staff to hold more reflective sessions. The aim was for staff to not be so hard on themselves and appreciate each other better.

Project description: The ward explored ideas around how to do this including:

- Creating and sharing learning points from previous incidents
- Running many smaller sessions to share learnings
- Modelling vulnerability in sharing learning

Project goal: improving supervisions and reflective practice to improve staff wellbeing

Project description: To improve supervision, the team developed a questionnaire that each supervisee filled in post session in order to understand quality, and developed posters which went up around the ward communicating the value of supervision. They are also encouraging all supervisors to take, or refresh, training in order to ensure supervisions are high quality. A

member of the team attended the IGA reflective practice training and will support the psychologist in shadowing groups and then delivering groups at times the psychologist can't make - including evenings and weekends. This will help offer more session times for staff, encouraging higher participation in these sessions.

Impact: There was record high uptake for supervisions during the period of programme support. Of those who attended, 10/11 had a positive experience and a need has been identified for supervisors to be able to better signpost staff to further support.

Project goal: to embed reflective practice and understand its importance for the team.

Project description: The team worked to embed reflective practice. They looked at how the team might select the right day and time for it to take place. The team implemented a way of measuring its impact looking for attendance, timing, learning and barriers to attendance.

Impact: So far, the team feel that they better understand reflective practice.

Project goal: to establish reflective practice group across the male and female side of the ward

Project description: To achieve this the team first conducted a staff survey to review what staff would like from a reflective practice group. Feedback from this survey was enacted in the first reflective practice session implemented. Extra staff were booked in to facilitate staff attending training. Feedback from staff was positive and the ward are focussing on sustaining this new group.

Project description: Using the Roots reflective framework with staff and service users to identify how to give staff space to process a challenging period, and embed trauma-informed practice

Project description: Increasing staff happiness and staff support by embedding a culture of voluntary reflection on the ward via adapting existing Safety Huddles, and reviewing the formal reflective practice offer

Project description: Helping staff feel more supported and boost morale via an updated reflective practice offer

Support for Staff

Support for Staff Improvement projects

Project goal: to ensure everyone feels a sense of wellbeing and support from others when they're on shift.

Project description: The team has four projects: 1) wellbeing check-ins using a questionnaire, with responses fed back to leadership, and leaders feeding back to the team what's been done; 2) psychologist drop-in sessions for individual members of staff; 3) away day focused on team-building; 4) updated break room resources to support wellbeing and de-stressing after challenging situations on the ward.

Impact: There is a "buzz" on the ward about Culture of Care and the resources being allocated to support their staff. Everyone is very open, with a good flow of communication about their projects among the whole staff.

Project goal: to improve staff wellbeing through enhancing communication, kindness and respect between colleagues.

Project description: To achieve this, the team has designed and implemented a 'How is everyone feeling board' where all staff are invited to place their name in the red/ yellow/ green zone during handover, according to how they are presenting to the shift that day. The team also introduced 'TLC (tender loving care) teas' - holding a moment in time for a cup of tea with a colleague or patient and truly connect.

Impact: this project has improved the working atmosphere on the ward overall. The 'how are you feeling board' reminded the team that all staff are human and have feelings, enabling staff to be more considerate of and display more kindness to each other. It has enhanced connections between team members, and started conversations about further projects that might enhance staff wellbeing on the ward.

Project goal: to develop a support document for staff attending the ward on their first day on the ward to help them with the culture on a deaf ward.

Project description: The team have developed a "Day One" leaflet which can be shared with new staff and bank staff to remind them of important facts and information when they start on the ward. This has been co-created with both hearing and deaf staff.

Project goal: to focus on support and wellbeing for staff.

Project description: Initiatives in the design/ implementation stage for this are:

- Focus on staff taking their breaks. As part of this a business proposal for a new staff sensory room was submitted
- A vision board has been created with anonymous staff input on patient experience, good-day indicators, barriers, and team values. RP sessions with a psychologist will support this work.
- a monthly "Wellbeing Wednesday" during handover to strengthen team connection.

Support for Staff Improvement projects

Impact: So far staff are generally taking better-quality breaks, though fixed break times remain difficult due to patient needs. Monthly “Wellbeing Wednesday’s” have been limited due to staffing availability. Funding has been agreed for a staff sensory room.

Project goal: focus on improving staff wellbeing and reducing burnout through offering enhanced wellbeing support to all staff.

Project description: The project involved a multifaceted approach to supporting staff wellbeing. This included creating a staff wellbeing board, displaying all the support and resources available to staff, including who to reach out to for further support. Appointing three staff wellbeing champions, to provide staff with targeted, informed wellbeing support. A peer support buddy system was created to provide wellbeing peer support to all colleagues and contribute to a psychologically safe and supportive ward environment. A daily staff wellbeing check-in was implemented to embed wellbeing into the daily rhythms and practices of the ward.

Impact: staff morale has improved across the ward, with colleagues reporting that they feel more supported at work and more valued as part of the team. The project has created a more open culture, where staff feel able to raise concerns and trust that these will be listened to and acted upon. Staff attendance at work has improved, alongside increased staff retention. Staff report feeling more motivated to come to work and more committed to continuing to work on the ward. Staff recruitment has strengthened to the point that the ward is shortlisting for interviews due to the volume of applications, which ward has previously not needed to do.

Project goal: 1) improve staff wellbeing by enhancing staff appreciation and recognition and 2) introduce anonymous feedback opportunities in order to cater for different communication styles and contact preferences.

Project description: After consulting ward staff, the project team created two feedback boxes. One for staff to nominate colleagues for 'staff member of the month' and the other for 'anonymous staff concerns and comments'. Both boxes were placed in the staff office, along with posters explaining their purpose and use, and were checked regularly by the ward manager. The team have created a staff member of the month poster on the ward, to display the 'staff member of the months' photo alongside their nomination comments. Anonymous feedback box contributions are addressed in person, anonymously in staff meetings and via confidential drop-in spaces with their psychologists as appropriate. The team also intends to create a 'you said; we did board' for visibility of the action and progress of anonymous comments/ feedback raised.

Impact: staff morale has improved. Staff now appreciate each other more, and feel more valued and recognised. Staff really value the option to raise concerns/ comments anonymously, giving greater overall confidence in the raising concerns process, which has enabled staff to feel more listened to and heard.

Support for Staff Improvement projects

Project goal: Improving staff wellbeing on the ward - making staff aware of what the support is and how they can access it.

Project description: Staff survey to understand how people feel supported and what could be improved. Reflective practice group on ward. Box for compliments about staff's work. Personal support plans produced with staff. Flow diagram to show staff support offer. Posters to direct staff to support available.

Impact: Sense of the ward being a more positive place. Some staff have started using personal support plans. Staff who've attended reflective practice group are now more aware of support available.

Project goal: Improve staff wellbeing and teamwork.

Project description: The team wanted to hold a space for discussion, have a suggestions/compliments box, set up a 'thank you' tree, use improvement huddles for ideas and to feed back on ideas better so staff knew what had happened to suggested ideas. The team launched a poster at their team meeting, set up a space group led by a member of the psychology team, created a suggestion box and began discussing ideas for improvement at daily huddles. They also sought funding for a team away day focused purely on wellbeing and team building.

Project goal: to improve our focus on team member wellbeing.

Project description: the team has been taking forward actions including two projects 1) checking in and recognising one another's work at handover and 2) improving the staff break room with updated furniture and resources.

Impact: this project has empowered the team to focus on staff wellbeing, which they don't often get a chance to do.

Project goal: improve staff wellbeing, including appreciating work done and celebrating the diversity of the team through greater awareness and understanding.

Staff had fed back that they were feeling burned out and not always appreciated at work. They had a culturally diverse team and there was not always an understanding of individuals' background and appreciation of each other's skills and ways of working. An opportunity existed to bring the team together, help them feel more supported and appreciated, and to develop greater understanding between individuals in the team.

Project description: The ward took the following steps while part of the programme:

- Developed a weekly newsletter, co-designed and co-produced with service users

Support for Staff Improvement projects

- Set up a “coffee morning” get together every Friday with service users to discuss ideas for the newsletter
- Produced a cultural calendar
- Set up a Microsoft Teams channel for storing documents and sharing ideas / asking for opinions using the chat function
- Set up a suggestion / appreciation box in the nurses station, which has been positively received by the team. The service users were inspired to set up their own box to give feedback to the team. The feedback is shared at community meetings.

Project goal: building effective relationships between staff members and celebrating their success.

Project description: celebrating the work staff do by collating what people are thankful for each week and sending these out to staff, also improving attendance at team meetings by making them hybrid so get all staff involved.

Impact: the team began to send out the weekly gritudes and attendance at team meetings improved.

Project goal: to help ensure all members of staff feel valued and cared for every time they're on shift.

Project description: the team has introduced a warm welcome drink or treat at start of every shift. The night staff prepare a drink for the day staff and vice versa to welcome each other onto shift. They have updated the wellbeing resources in staff break rooms, and are looking into introducing a new staff recognition programme.

Impact: the project has energised the wider ward team, who are really happy to have these projects providing peer to peer support.

Project goal: The team asked themselves the question "How can each of us on the team create a more positive and effective working environment that supports us to feel motivated and appreciated?"

Project description: The team decided to implement a protected reflective space at the end of a shift handover, to provide opportunity for expressing appreciation to each other and reflecting on what had gone well/what had not gone so well. The team created a prompt sheet with some basic questions to help facilitate this.

Impact: these forums have helped contribute to a more enthusiastic & engaged vibe on the ward - both amongst staff & patients.

Support for Staff Improvement projects

Project goal: to help staff feel more recognised and valued on the ward. They came up with the following words to summarise the aspiration: teamwork, excitement, empowerment, respect, serenity, happiness and togetherness.

Project description: The team will implement a "stars of the month" recognition board, asking colleagues to nominate people for star of the month with positive feedback demonstrating the values of the ward. This also required the team to define a shortlist of qualities that set out good work on the ward. These were: Caring, Teamwork, Dedication, Kindness, Professionalism.

Impact: through doing a project together, the team felt new MDT colleagues had started working together and supporting each other quickly. The team also reflected it had been valuable to go through the slower start of identifying which idea to work by debating them as this then enabled them to work more quickly.

Project goal: we will work as a united team, solving problems at the right level, embracing change with confidence, and speaking up with courage. Together, we'll build a culture of trust, ownership, and progress.

Project description: Team members wanted to feel more empowered and involved in decisions and influence ideas / solutions moving forward. This would also support team accountability and empowerment. Therefore, they worked on setting up a space / platform / protected hour to raise concerns and identify solutions. It will also be used to identify and recognise good work and share appreciation.

Project goal: develop a new staff room which provides a quiet and relaxing space for staff.

Project description: The team identified a need for a room for staff to look after their own wellbeing, having a place to eat, decompress, listen to music, pray, call others and to just be in quiet. The Project Team engaged with staff during their Away Day and developed a bespoke Staff Survey to gain consensus with the vision (i.e. what's in scope and out of scope for the use of the room). The team also needed to establish a budget which is being collated in partnership with the estates team to submit to the sponsor. The team also explored options if the budget was not forthcoming, so a back-up plan is in place to still have the room and a space for wellbeing, however, it would not contain the luxury items the team asked for such as a new fridge. The current room will be cleared in the coming weeks so the team can start to create the new space.

Project goal: to improve the wards' staff room, and have a team away day

Project description: through conversations with colleagues the project team gathered an idea of improvements that could be made to the staff room, and sent a request to their managers

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(including lockers, clothes hangers and a cooling system). The team are beginning to plan their first away day to take place Summer 2026.

Project goal: to develop a series of Team Away Days to help improve staff morale, sickness absence and better team working.

Project description: The ward has been through challenging times over the last six months and the team felt they needed a compassion reset. To help with this, the team undertook a staff survey to get baseline data and seek ideas/suggestions and also introduced a staff suggestion box. During the programme they developed plans to include more team building in their away days and create a cultural events calendar.

Project goal: build a more open and cohesive team.

Project description: The team added a wellbeing question to the daily huddle, as well as a regular question on how to improve the ward from a staff perspective. They also trialed a staff member weekly receiving a box of chocolates as a thank you for their work that week. Early feedback on changes to the huddles were very positive especially from new members of the team.

Project goal: To cultivate a culture where mutual support and self care are better prioritised.

Project description: The team focused on raising awareness of wellbeing, feeling connected as a team and building new habits and routines. This involved staff development at away days, a staff survey with tailored questions, and developing a standard operating procedure for post incident support. Co-production with the team has been an important theme running through this project with an MDT as part of the core team.

Project goal: to create a psychologically safe culture which promotes effective team working.

Project description: The team were keen to create a general sense of positive feeling on the ward, where people check in with each other, give positive comments to each other, smile and laugh together. They would like more positive feedback from each other, which the manager can share. There is a desire for staff to feel more cared for, valued and confident. Staff keen to gain more familiarity in accepting constructive criticism, promoting a culture of healthy debate with an agreed set of team values.

So far, initial staff surveys have been sent out to all ward staff gauge how staff are feeling to date, which are being gathered and analysed.

Project goal: to enhance staff psychological safety and emotional wellbeing.

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Project description: The team created a 3 to 6-month pilot plan to enhance staff psychological safety and emotional wellbeing. This will be achieved by introducing short, structured wellness check-ins between reflective practice sessions. Key elements of the project include:

- Proactive Wellbeing: leveraging existing reflective practices, with a key focus on addressing wellbeing at the start of the shift.
- Adaptive Implementation: The plan incorporates team feedback during the pilot process, allowing ward leadership to adjust and continuously improve the approach.
- Integrated Communication: Opportunities during handovers will be utilized to share information and reinforce these wellness initiatives.
- Clear Communication Plan: the plan will be shared transparently with all ward staff.

The team are now focusing on implementing this plan.

Project goal: to improve the psychological safety of the ward staff team

Project description: the team came up with the following ideas to act on this during the project:

- Adding safety huddle and staff wellbeing check-ins to handover
- Creating a Let's Be agreement
- Reviewing cultural calendars
- Introduce the idea of wellbeing breaks to the team
- Organise a staff event in between discharge and admission
- Seeking buy in through communicating the project to the whole team

Project goal: to improve team working, communication and support for staff.

Project description: This included increasing activity provision: embedding a daily walk for service users - ideally outside but inside if needed, followed by an intentional pause, and starting a crocheting club for staff and patients to crochet together. Team members also worked on sleep hygiene with plans for night sky projectors and additional radios for service users. Staff have incorporated rhythms to celebrate one another - through 'team member of the month' which is followed by specific positive feedback and through an end of year activity to celebrate team achievements during the year. The team also led work to improve handover processes, redesigning the handover sheet, and designing exercises for STAR days to help the team see the importance of clear handover. The team updated their team charter, and held exercises on STAR days to help team members understand each other's roles better and improve team working.

Impact: activities on the ward are going well, staff confidence is increasing, and DATEX incidents are decreasing, with staff reporting a positive impact on staff morale. Staff report that the ward is a much better and happier place to work than it was at the start of the programme. There have been significant improvements in handover, including clearer flow of information and the expectation now set that the electronic handover is completed at the end of every shift.

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Project goal: to raise staff confidence through educational sessions, and raise morale through a gratitude board.

Project description: The team identified lack of confidence in managing the physical health issues their service users have. In order to address this they plan to arrange a series of educational sessions on physical health issues for all staff. The first session on NEWS2 scores is planned, with further sessions in the pipeline. They have also planned and discussed a gratitude and Culture of Care board for their staff room - staff have been enthusiastic about this idea and they have obtained the board. They will set it up soon.

Impact: so far one educational session has been planned and scheduled. The team is confident that they will set their gratitude board up soon, and the ward team feels very positive about this.

Project goal: to improve the induction offer to new starters/newly promoted staff, so that new colleagues felt more confident about their role and being part of the team.

Project description: The team is putting in place a buddy system, so that new staff have a colleague from their staff group who can help to point them in the right direction. The buddy will offer a warm welcome & introduction to the team, be available to shadow, introduce patients on the ward (i.e. going through the patient folder & notes), and generally being available to answer questions. This buddy role complements but does not replace the duties of a line manager.

Project goal: to better support staff who are off and returning to the team.

Project description: The team is implementing a contact process for staff who are off on extended absence to see how people would want to be contacted and what information they would need, the team are also exploring a check in for testing.

Project goal: to improve support for staff after incidents.

Project description: the team has been taking forward actions including working to implement:

- updated debrief process for immediately after incidents to support staff with time out, coffee/tea break, empathetic support from staff
- drop-in sessions with psychologist for individual staff members.

Project goal: to better support team members after incidents or personal challenges.

Project description: Establish a structured support process for use after incidents or to support members of staff after personal challenges. The emphasis is on empathising with team members so they feel valued and supported. Team members will offer them a time out, tea/coffee break, tailored assignments, and/or extra check-ins with other team members.

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Impact: the project is at an early stage, with materials being developed.

Project goal: to design a space for staff to be able to go to in order to decompress post-incident. This space needed to feel soothing and in line with the compassion-focussed therapy approach of the hospital.

Project description: The project team decided to create a 'soothe room' - a space that staff can go to de-stress, de-escalate and help regain a calm mindset. This was a very different space from the staff room - not for meetings/meals/sleeping or phone calls but intended to help staff feel supported and calm after incidents. This space will help staff to reflect on situations and regain composure before they go back to their next task. The space will also support those who have suffered from incidents of racial abuse to recover post-incident.

Impact: even the fact that the need was identified had a positive effect on staff, helping them to feel valued and that their wellbeing was prioritised. Once implemented, the impact of the soothe room should be felt by the whole hospital, not just one service.

Project goal: reduce the number of incidents on the ward and ensure staff and service users feel supported during and post incidents.

Project description: Project Restore involves reviewing organisational processes around incidents and encouraging a culture of open communication rather than blame. The team will provide a space for service users to 'chill out' that is a safe haven where they can relax and recover from incidents. The team have been focussing on understanding one another's skills better and utilising these on the ward to help support one another around incidents. The team are also instating a cultural celebration calendar, in which staff and service users can bring food/music/art from their culture to celebrate differences and reduce the number of incidents driven by racism.

Impact: at the end of six months, the team had a better understanding of one another's skills and were now all vocally discussing how best to manage incidents. Anecdotally, the ward team mentioned this was already leading to fewer incidents on the ward and more confidence in handling them among the ward team.

Project goal: to improve de-briefs following incidents, empowering all staff to feel capable and confident to lead a de-brief.

Project description: a presentation on debriefs was shown to all ward staff, followed by all ward staff attending specialist training on debriefs, with positive feedback from those who attended. Planned for HCAs to lead de-briefs with support from the wider team. Role play sessions for facilitators are being set up prior to rolling out ward debrief sessions.

Support for Staff Improvement projects

Project goal: To eradicate physical assaults on the ward and work towards creating a harm free environment for staff and patients by end of December 2027.

Project description: the team created a Ward Code of conduct. The ward team agreed to reinforce consequences of actions to patients when they are admitted as well as to current inpatients, through weekly 1-2-1 discussions and a new easy read document. The team has also introduced standard questions for all staff handover meetings, looking to proactively reduce assaults. The team continues to work on implementing the actions above.

Project goal: to improve staff experience by reducing abuse to staff.

Project description: The team are keen to create a set of Ward Expectations which support staff to challenge abusive behaviour from patients, to support there being consequences for actions and make other commitments clear to patients. This project is at a development stage.

Project description: Improving team communication and cohesion via an updated debrief process that explicitly focuses on staff wellbeing

Project description: Helping staff feel more appreciated through a monthly staff lunch to build connection, and using RAG check-ins with each other to know when people need more support

Project description: Addressing a theme that emerged from a staff survey, building trust in supervisors and ward management through conversations between supervisees and supervisors, and e-learning for supervisors

Project description: Co-designing a new restorative staff supervision system based on staff feedback, including creating a less task-focused supervision form, training supervisors, and replacing managerial supervision with clinical skills days

Project description: Improving the quality and increasing the number of debriefs after incidents, including ensuring they are supportive spaces, through developing an SOP and building charge nurses' confidence in running 'hot' debriefs

Project description: Co-designing a standardised patient package - "This is Me" / implementing Hot and Cold debriefs

Team Dynamics

Team Dynamics Improvement projects

Project goal: to explore how the team could work together more effectively so that everyone feels welcome, valued, and a sense of belonging. The aim was to help each person strengthen their own mental health, and to create a ward culture where people feel safe to be their authentic selves.

Project description: The ward implemented a "wellbeing check-in" during daily handovers, facilitated by the nurse running the meeting. During a check-in, each person would share what went well during their shift and who they want to recognise or thank for good work. They also began inviting religious leaders to facilitate community meetings so they could help everyone better understand each other's religious practices.

The team also developed a "get to know me" board to help staff learn about each other. They got input on the board design from staff and patients and then asked each staff member to submit a photo and fun facts about themselves.

Impact: used on feedback at staff and community meetings, team members felt more listened to and appreciated, and service users liked learning more about the team through the "get to know me" board, because it humanised everyone. Staff and service users were also starting to better understand each other's religious practices.

Project goal: to work as a harmonious ward team where staff respect each other as individuals, to establish an environment where staff feel safe to share how they are feeling, and to create a positive focus for staff at the start, middle and end of a shift.

Project description: the team introduced several initiatives to address their goals:

- Huddles, where all staff on shift come together at 11am and 6pm to run through a set of 6 prompt questions on how they are feeling, how the shift is going, do they have the support they require and are they having their breaks.
- Positive vibes quotes: starting each shift by sharing a positive quote (of their choice, or chosen from a set of laminated pre-printed quotes), to spread 'positive vibes' amongst the team
- Ward Chit Chat: a monthly lunch open to all ward staff, where staff bring food from their culture to share along with conversation (not about work)
- Birthday celebrations: celebrating each other's birthdays through the giving of a card (and a cake if they are on shift on their birthday).

Impact: this project has really connected the team, and helped them to foster a sense of togetherness. It has provided the team the space and time to open up and share how they are

feeling, while enhancing the support they provide each other. Staff now feel more valued and the atmosphere overall on the ward feels more positive. Together, this has enhanced the quality of care they can provide their patients.

Project goal: for staff to get to know each other better and reflect together at the end of their shift.

Project description: To achieve this, the team did the following:

- Creating a 'getting to know you' board celebrating staff's cultural diversity, likes and dislikes, which includes photos.
- Creating a 'rate your day board' giving staff the opportunity to say at the end of their shift what went well, what could be better.
- Start planning a team away day to bring staff together for team building exercises.

Impact: the 'getting to know you' board has received lots of positive feedback from staff, and sparked lots of interest in and conversations between staff members.

Project goal: to foster stronger ward team dynamics, promoting a more inclusive environment, and driving positive cultural enhancements on the ward.

Project description: initiatives designed during the project include:-

- Cultural Days: To celebrate individuality and ensure staff feel seen and heard.
- Creating a Nursing Station: To enhance nursing presence and support on the ward.
- Implementing a Staff Skills Group: To foster continuous growth and team bonding.

Impact: the Cultural Days were successfully embedded on the ward, with positive feedback from staff. The other projects are at the planning and implementation stage.

Project goal: to embed the team charter and create an environment where staff are able to manage change themselves without having to escalate.

Project description: The team have undertaken a number of changes such as implementing visual controls like a team charter, a kamishibai board, a task board and also looking to implement a co-ordinator role to help ensure that the team understands who to approach on shift. The team have also developed a garden where they are able to develop and grow ideas.

Impact: bringing the focus to the small things that the team needed to fine tune, and opening up conversations on how the team could do things differently. Consequently, the team has been able to enact and own change themselves.

Project goal: to bring the team together following a series of incidents on the ward which has had a negative effect on the ward culture.

Project description: To achieve this, the team conducted a team bonding activity and focus on building positive culture as a team - The team have organised a fundraising walk for a colleague currently off work, using this to springboard a series of team activities. The team are also looking to put a simple check in with the team into their day to day practice to support each other's well being.

Impact: the team have a lot of interest in their fundraising event with 18 of the staff signed up, there have been positive early reflections from the daily check in, the team have been challenged to see if they can better measure the impact of this.

Project goal: for working relationships within the team will be based on open communication, shared values and trauma-informed practices.

The team wanted to work towards 1) stronger team understanding of what trauma-informed care is 2) stronger team understanding of the ward's values 3) better use of spaces they had to communicate and improving how they communicated with each other 4) empowering junior staff to speak up more.

Project description: The team undertook a range of activities during the project including:

- Revisiting the current team mission statement
- Considering team development workshops
- Creating opportunities for team bonding activities
- Learning from a previous quality improvement project at the trust where another ward did some great work on trauma informed care

Project goal: to improve teamwork on the ward.

Project description: The team are considering creating a board in the handover room - for ward team members to add to with what 'good teamwork' looks like to them. This will open discussions on good teamwork and how the team would like to get there. They are also looking to improve the circulation of minutes to those who were not able to make team meetings, to aid with whole team communication.

Project description: Improving the process for resolution and / or escalation of conflicts within the team

Project description: Building more psychological safety within the team to enable constructive conversations around responses to racism and emotional regulation

Project description: Improving team cohesion and informal support offered to one another, via sharing positive feedback and organising birthday cards

Project description: Strengthening integration of the MDT in the ward staff team

Therapeutic Relationships

Therapeutic Relationships Improvement projects

Project goal: To increase each staff member's sense of belonging and improve respect and connection among the whole team; and to increase involvement of HCAs in care planning and delivery in partnership with a named nurse.

Project description: Staff and patients create "this is me" shields that can be displayed on the ward to spark conversations and help people get to know each other. Use a "this is me" conversation tool to involve HCAs more in supporting specific patients as part of a keyworker / named nurse partnership. HCAs initiate the process with all new patients and this information is taken into account in their care plans. The Key Worker programme is aimed at upskilling HCAs in care planning and continuous learning from partnering with a named nurse.

Project impact: Staff and patients have engaged in creating their shields, and this has improved relationships as people get to know each other; the Key Worker programme is being tested with two HCAs.

Project goal: to embed formulations with ward staff for difficult patients, aiming to reduce incidents.

Project description: The team has previously had a difficult patient and had formulation meetings. The team found these very useful but the supporting MDT were struggling to find time to repeat this. The project is about making the case for repeating this approach for difficult patients, setting up with the ward team to see how they approach the Consultants and Psychologists to invest the time in a formulation.

Impact: the team have reflected positively on the impact for the first patient undergoing a formulation. Narrative feedback is that there has been a reduction in patient incidents and escalations.

Project goal: to empower staff to feel they have the tools to work closely together and look after our patients.

Project description: The team have introduced monthly formulation sessions - run by the consultant on the ward, and open to all MDT members to discuss one patient at a time, their presentation, early life and to answer staff questions. This is a response to the ward type and

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patient mix changing with feedback from staff that they were feeling less confident in managing a new and different patient mix.

Project description: staff attending the sessions have been extremely positive about them, they feel more confident in managing the patients discussed, they have more empathy for them and what they have been through in their lives and find it easier to understand their behaviour. Staff have been discussing the formulation sessions and the impact on them in between sessions.

Project description: Compiling more accessible and simpler training for staff on therapeutic relationships and eating disorders, for use by the staff on the ward, staff from other wards, and agency/bank staff

Project description: More support for non-regular staff to quickly build relationships with service users, through a renewed induction process, a 'this is me' board with staff photos, and shift in language used on the ward

Project description: Building confidence and competence of staff engaging and interacting with patients on their hobbies and likes

Project description: Setting up daily 1:1 staff-patient protected time, as well as instituting daily staff safety huddles

Project description: Based on staff and service user feedback and a training needs analysis, developing training to build staff confidence in understanding and creating therapeutic spaces/additional aids for changing patient mix