



Triangle of Care
Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust – Annual Report
February 2025

Trust Overview

The Triangle of Care (ToC) is a framework for working together to support recovery, promote safety and maintain wellbeing of people using mental health services and their carers. Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust began delivery of the Triangle of Care in 2018, achieving a 2 star accreditation (the maximum an organisation can achieve for mental health services). It has been able to retain the 2 star accreditation by providing annual reports to demonstrate the progress being made.

The ToC agenda aligns closely to our objectives within our family, friends and carers strategy which aims to offer inclusive and collaborative care as a way of working.

This report represents the progress we have made over the past year.

Executive Summary

- The Trust continues to make progress against the standards of the Triangle of Care and is currently re-visiting the self assessments and action plans by service area.
- The Trust's family, friends and carers strategy 2021 – 2024 has been extended until October 2025 as we continue to work on the objectives which align closely to the six key principles of the Triangle of Care.
- A family, friend and carers handbook has been coproduced with mental health carers. It is available for carers accessing our over 18 mental health services. The expectation is for services to share this as soon as a carer is identified so it is available at the start of their journey with us and includes various information, guidance and support. The handbook provides a personal approach, with carer messages throughout. The introduction includes.

"As family members, friends and carers of people accessing mental health services, we have worked with Oxford Health NHS professionals to design this handbook. It is something we wish we had received at the start of our journey. We genuinely hope it will be of use and benefit to you. Please don't be put off by the size of this handbook. Look at it and take what you need when you feel able. It is not exhaustive. It is intended to be more of an information tool that can be regularly updated. It can stay with you as you go through, what may be a very personal and sometimes difficult journey, with the person you care for. It does not preach, it does not make promises, it does not have all the answers, but it does rely heavily on our own experiences of mental health services and our own personal journeys to hopefully support you and help you through yours."



Carer Champions

- The Trust continues to grow the carer champion role across its services, with many of our inpatient and community mental health teams now having an active role within the team. The role is responsible to advocate for carers, raise awareness and support the team to engage with carers. In some areas, more work is required to ensure this is an active role so that it becomes embedded within the team and is achieving the aims of the role and, ultimately, we can see improved outcomes for carers.
- Carer Champions meet by service area at a regular forum to receive and share updates, share learning and to work on carer initiatives. As we have increased the number of carer champions it has meant that the number of forums we offer has increased too.
- In 2024, the Trust Carers Lead held the first carer champions event which was well attended and gave everyone the opportunity to share, network and celebrate the achievements that have been made.
- Our Forensic Service has a Family Champion on every ward. Family champions continue to meet monthly and work hard to support their colleagues in engaging with families and carers.
- Oxford Health has introduced a parent carer peer support role in the CAMHs Autism and Learning Disability team. The role is in the early stages, it is expected to cover parent support and engagement, sharing of information and navigating the system. As the role becomes more established, the service can take opportunities to learn along the way regarding what is helpful to parents using the service.

Carer Involvement/Carers Voice

- Carer involvement continues to grow across the Trust. The carers voice is considered just as important as the service users. Services have become more pro-active requesting involvement through our experience and involvement team. We have refreshed our involvement policy and are currently looking at creating more robust processes for carers and service users to get involved including an involvement pack with guidance.
- In 2024 our interview panels for our Trust CEO and Chief Nurse included carers.
- 'Our Voice' forums have become more established and carers numbers continue to grow. Carers and service users have the opportunity to get involved and work together with staff to improve quality of care.
- Our experience and involvement forum is currently postponed as we are looking at how we can offer this more effectively – it is likely this trust-wide group will have oversight of both the Trust experience and involvement strategy, the family, friends and carer strategy and the Triangle of Care. It is expected that the group membership will include carers and service users as it had previously.
- Carers continue to be involved as members of the review team for our peer review visits into clinical services and training is provided to them.
- Our experience and involvement team hold details of carers who would like to get involved and will contact individuals as and when involvement opportunities arise.
- The Forensic Service family & friends action group has met throughout 2024. This is a group of staff and family and carer representatives who work together to improve how the service works with families, friends and carers. Key achievements in 2024 have been producing a



family, friends and carers information booklet for the Specialist Community Forensic Team, organising two carers' events for the service and reviewing the visitor's policy.

Training

- The Trust's carer awareness e-learning module is currently being refreshed. This training in non-mandatory and completion numbers remain low. All service ToC action plans include completion of the carer awareness eLearning, and this will be a focus for 2025. We are currently exploring options to make this part of our mandatory training for all staff.
- Working with families training has been coproduced and is being delivered to teams by the Trust Carers Lead and co-facilitated with a carer. This is gradually being rolled out across our mental health services.
- The master's module: working in partnership with family and carers using psycho-social interventions is available to our qualified staff. The module aims to develop practitioners' skills in engagement, assessment, formulation, problem solving, communication and relapse prevention in partnership with the families and carers of people experiencing mental illness. It runs once a year with 12 students who are nurses, occupational therapists or social workers.
- Life Beyond the Cubicle eLearning resources launched in 2024 to help those working in mental health services and emergency departments to work well with families during a mental health crisis. This eLearning resource was co-produced and is available to our staff through our L&D portal. This training is non mandatory. [Life Beyond the Cubicle: eLearning Resources • Making Families Count](#)
- The Complex Needs Service Psycho-educational weekend for families and carers continues to be held annually. It is aimed at family members and carers who are supporting someone with a diagnosis of personality disorder or complex emotional needs.

Trust developments and initiatives for carers

- Oxford Health appointed a part time Carers Lead for our four Buckinghamshire Mental Health Teams. The new role supports teams with their Triangle of Care developments, think family agenda and supports carers through our groups, workshops and events.
- The Trust has a dedicated email address for carers; 'icareyoucare'. This is made available on the various resources that we share with our carers including our newly launched handbook, carers webpages and carer related resources.
- Carers workshops continue to be offered to provide education and support to carer on specific mental health conditions. The annual programme offers new topics for carers and sessions are well attended. [Carers-Workshop-programme-January-June-2025.pdf](#). Feedback from carers include;

"Lots of useful information about medications and side effects, thoughtfully and empathetically presented."

"I found it clarified understanding generally especially over the mixes of medications and their likelihood of effectiveness".



"Well presented - covered topics that were relevant as had examples of situations that i see as a carer. Being on a course with others with the same experience also helpful."

"Helped understand depression better and better ways to help someone suffering with depression".

"Extremely helpful as a timely reminder of techniques previously suggested but which become neglected over time."

- The Trust continues to offer regular carers support groups for the adult mental health directorates. One of the groups has recently collaborated with Rethink Mental Illness Carers Support Service.
- CAMHs community teams continue to offer 'Walking with You' (WWY) which is a monthly parent and carer support group for those supporting young people up to the age of 25. It is not a requirement to be open to any CAMHs teams to access this group. Each session is focussed on a topic followed by discussion and supportive conversations. The Oxfordshire WWY groups are facilitated by parent peer support workers.. In 2024 face to face coffee morning sessions were introduced and we plan to do more of these in 2025.
- Some of our services across the Trust offer their own groups and workshops for carers, family members and parents. New developments are;
 - Buckinghamshire older adults mental health team have convened a carers hub for anyone who is caring for someone over 65 and/or with a diagnosis of dementia. This launched in January 2025.
 - The CAMHs siblings group which include young people who have a caring or supporting role.
- The Supportive Steps team launched in 2024, this offer is linked with the 'Getting Help' and Getting More Help teams in Oxfordshire CAMHs. This offer includes hosting webinars on various topics including what to expect from CAMHs and what you can do while you are waiting for an appointment. This roll out began during the second half of 2024 and is offered to parents/carers on the waiting list in these teams, it also includes support phone calls with the clinical team and parent peer support workers.
- The Trust public website has pages specifically for carers; [Caring for our carers - I care, you care](#). The dedicated webpages were coproduced with our carers and offer information, guidance and support for carers of all ages. We continue to develop the site and have recently added a veteran carers page. Additionally, our newly launched family, friend and carers handbook is available on the site to view and download. The site functions have meant we can provide multiple accessibility options for carers to access the handbook.
- Carers Week for 2024 brought another year of wellbeing activities available to the carers of our service users and also our staff who are carers. The week included daily wellbeing activities, including meditation, art for wellbeing and finding time to be creative.
- As part of the Think Family initiative, some of our in-patient units have established family surgeries to have dedicated time to chat with the ward team about their relative's care and recovery journey, as well as support for them. This is done either on the phone, in person by appointment slot or online. We are looking to offer this across all our inpatient units in the future. Some of the feedback includes;



"I have found the ward team exemplary and so supportive and understanding of both XX and my needs considering my situation. Please can you ensure that the other staff know this. In fact I myself will also miss the support you and your team have given us when we leave. "

"Understanding and empathetic response to phonecalls and concerns. Positive attitude to reassure family."

- Adult and older adult mental health Inpatient units offer a carers introduction letter which should be sent with the family, friends and carers handbook on their relative's admission onto the ward. This new initiative is taking time to embed, with some wards working better than others. We are currently auditing this to monitor our progress.
- Monthly online meditation sessions have been available to carers for over a year now. The sessions have been funded by the Oxford Health Charity and have been well attended and received by our carers, providing an opportunity to take some time out for themselves and to focus on their wellbeing. Our Trust charity funding comes to an end in February 2025 and we are looking at other sources for funding to be able to continue with this valued offer.
- Oxford Health are active partners in the Oxfordshire County Councils all age unpaid carers strategy and recently launched Buckinghamshire all age unpaid carers strategy. Alongside local carers organisations and the voluntary sector (VCSEs) we are looking at ways that we can collaborate to grow our offer to carers and overall improve outcomes for carers across our communities.
- In December 2024 our adult and older adult mental health carers support groups had their annual trip to Waddesdon Manor Christmas event. This event has become an established trip for our carers which they look forward to. It is supported by the Oxford Health Charity so carers are able to come along for free.
- The experience and involvement team has been developing an EbE (service user and carer) training offer and used the quality improvement methodology to develop it. The aim of the project is to 'Improve the confidence and competence of Experts by Experience by 50% following receiving training'. This project is important to service users, carers and staff because if we can improve the quality and amount of co-production work across the mental health partnership and Trust, then this will improve the quality of services our clients and carers receive. The training includes an induction, understanding co-production and how to share your lived experience as an EbE.
- A new information booklet for the family and friends of those who are supported by the Specialist Community Forensic Team (SCFT) has been developed. It includes important and useful information about what the team does, how they can be involved and support that is available.
- In 2024, CAMHs launched the Support Hope and Recovery online Network (SHaRON) Platform. This online peer-to-peer support network offers parents a space to connect and share experiences while waiting for further support. This is being used within the Neuro Developmental Conditions (NDC) and Supportive Steps service currently.
- The NDC team hosted joint webinars with Oxfordshire Parent Carer Forum, sharing information on neurodiversity. They have also hosted joint webinars with Autism Oxford during 2024, to support parents and carers of young people with a suspected neurodiversity,



this is offered to those who may be waiting for a CAMHS service, or have received a diagnosis.

Challenges and Risks

- Triangle of Care is a way of working, it is a journey and not a tick box exercise. Commitment is required from all staff to this quality improvement work and to implement the standards into practice. With service demands and reduced capacity, sometimes staff commitment to this work can slip.
- We offer a variety of resources for carers across our Trust including our newly launched carers handbook but carers awareness of these resources is heavily reliant on our services talking to carers and sharing the information with them. More work must be done with services to ensure these opportunities are taken. Our services are in contact with carers in their daily practice and so are best placed to do this.
- Capacity and demand across clinical teams has continued to be a challenge which has had an impact on attendance at our regular champions forums.
- The high use of agency staff and high turnover of substantive staff has affected the knowledge and understanding about the Triangle of Care standards.
- Identification and support for young carers is an area that needs more attention. Going forward, future collaborations with our local authorities are anticipated to support this effort.
- Carers data is key to support the developments we are making. Our patient record system doesn't currently support this effectively or adequately as carer related information can be recorded in multiple places. It is important that we can routinely record, manage and access carer related data i.e carer registered/identified and referrals/signposting made. Additionally, to understand carers current experiences we need to have IWGC working better for us. Currently IWGC feedback is low. Both of these areas require further attention so we have accessible data and can monitor the progress we are making.

Upcoming developments/areas of focus

- We continue to focus on the key message that ToC is a way of working across our organisation and there are no exceptions.
- We are currently exploring our patient record system (RiO) to see how it can support managing carer data in a more effective and accessible way.
- The process of signposting for a carer's assessment differs across the geography of the Trust. We must raise more awareness of a carer's assessment, the benefits to having one and the referral processes. To support this effort, we are monitoring this via our local carers organisations and the referrals they receive from us. We also looking at what more we can do to support carer assessment referrals by working more closely with our teams.
- To increase the dissemination of our newly launched family, friends and carers handbook. It is expected services talk about this with carers who they come into contact with and share the resource. To support this effort, we are auditing its distribution in some areas. More focus will be given to raising awareness to get the outreach we need.
- Our organisation feedback mechanism is IWantGreatCare. We have a survey specifically designed for carers to complete on their experiences of our services. We need to increase our efforts to gain feedback to understand carers experiences and to support our developmental work.



- To incorporate the patient and carer race equality framework (PCREF) into our ToC self assessments and action planning, to ensure that we are inclusive within our action plans to improve outcomes for people from racial and ethnic minority communities.
- A focus on our training for staff; carer awareness and working together with families and carers. All ToC action plans include this, and this will be monitored to ensure that progress is being made.
- New for 2025 - we are preparing to launch a Trust-wide Instagram page for carers. Instagram will help us raise awareness and achieve better outreach to carers across our regions. We aim to use it to promote support, services, health and wellbeing, and much more.
- National data suggests that 1-3 NHS staff have a caring role. Our carer support groups, workshops, meditation sessions and other events are open to our staff who are carers, however, the uptake is low. A staff support group for working carers is currently being explored.

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