



QNLD
QUALITY NETWORK
FOR LEARNING
DISABILITY SERVICES

QNLD NEWSLETTER

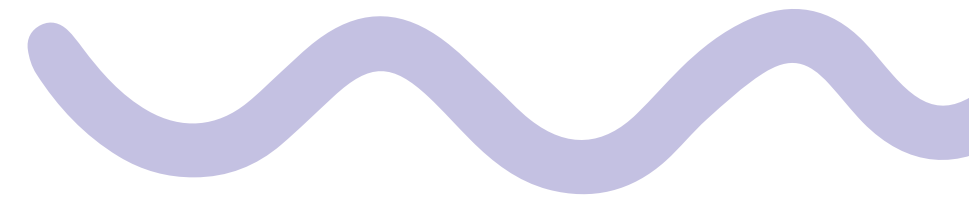
Issue 2, Winter 2025

WINTER EDITION 2025

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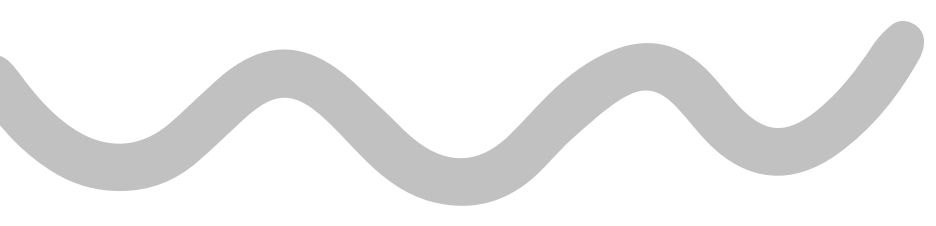
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INTRODUCTION



Welcome to the Winter 2025 edition of the Quality Network for Learning Disability Services (QNLD) newsletter!

It's been a little while since our last newsletter but we are back with a new look and some wonderful new content. We've had a great year so far and we're so excited to share what we've been up to with you all.

This past year we've welcomed some new member services and facilitated several events, reviews and training sessions. We've also recently published the [5th Edition of our QNLD Inpatient Standards](#), which reflect the current landscape of adult inpatient mental health care for people with learning disabilities and work to address issues influencing patient experience. We couldn't have done any of it without your input and engagement so thank you all for all your enthusiasm and your time.

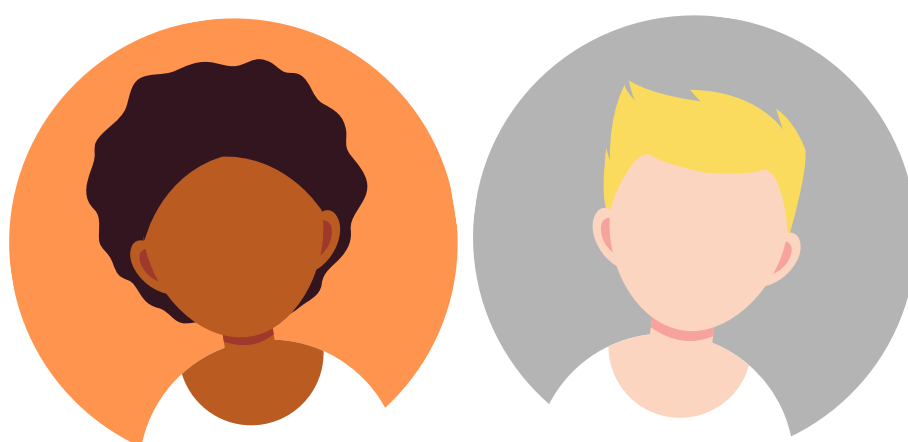
In this edition of the newsletter you can read more about what the QNLD project team have been up to over the last year, how the network has developed and some of the amazing work that services across the network have been implementing.

The network works best as a peer support group where member services can share learning and innovation. The QNLD project team are proud to be able to support you all with your work.

Over the next year and in the years to come we hope to continue to help you provide even better care and outcomes for people who engage with your services.

Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!

Esther & Jake
(QNLD Project Officers)



A YEAR IN REVIEW

* Membership

Over the past year, gained some new members and maintained a steady membership profile.

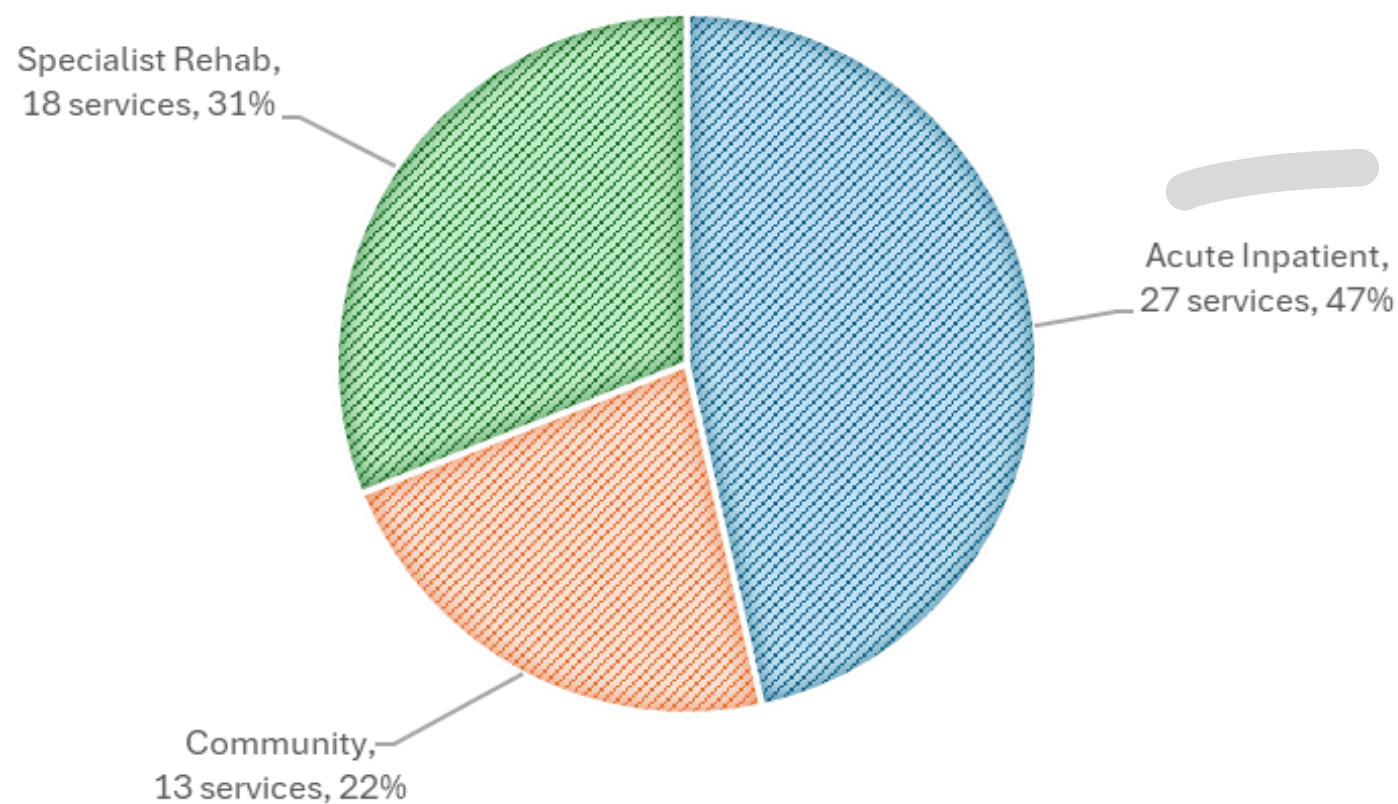


Figure 1: Number of member services across the 3 QNLD branches.

* Peer Reviews

In 2025 we coordinated **86% more** reviews compared with 2024. This was a particularly busy year for peer reviews! We had a few more services completing Developmental Cycles, in preparation to go for Accreditation next year.

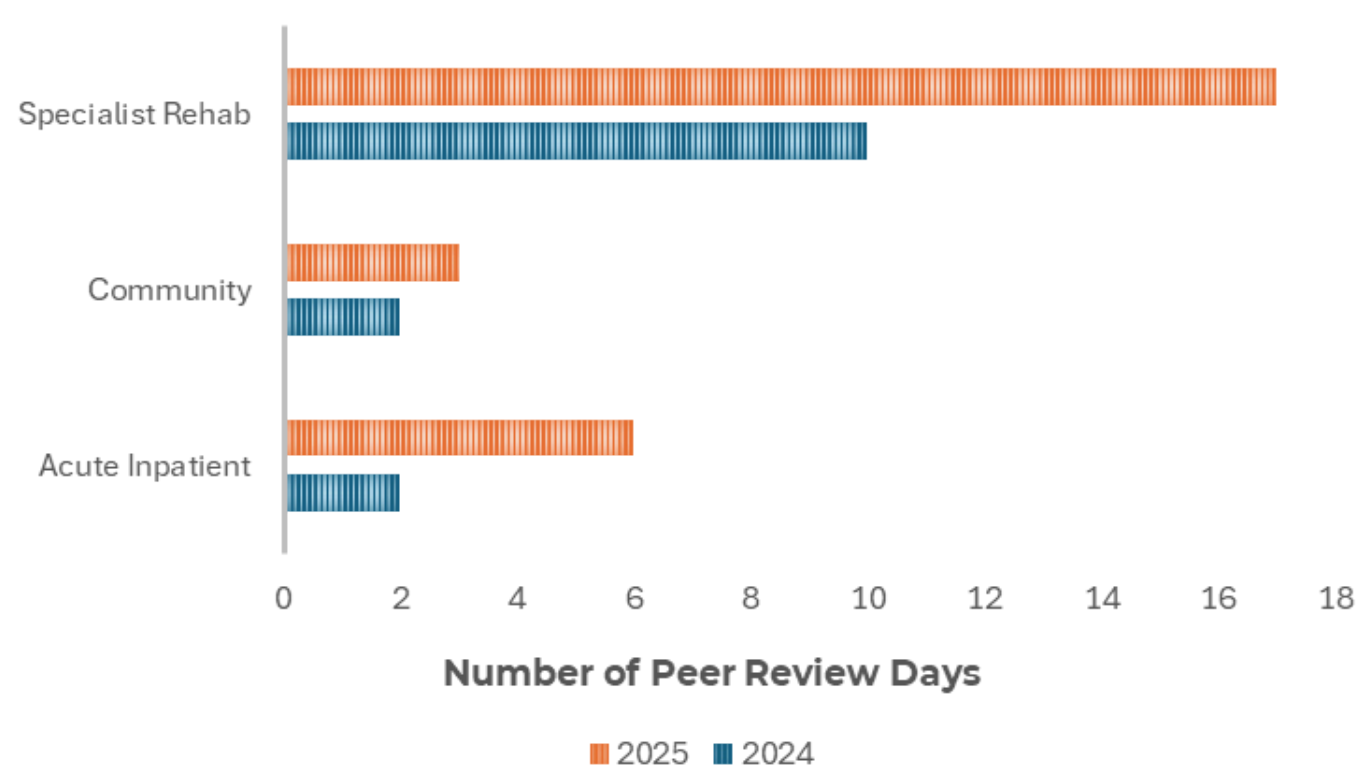


Figure 3: Number of Peer Review Days scheduled per QNLD branch.

* Annual Forum

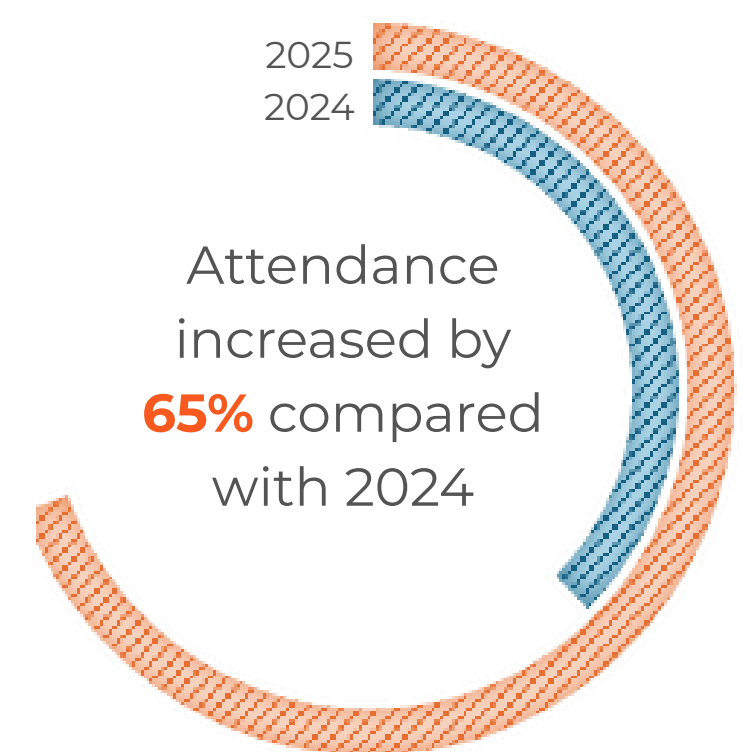


Figure 2: Number of attendees at the 2024 (40 people) and 2025 Annual Forum events (65 people).

* Special Interest Event

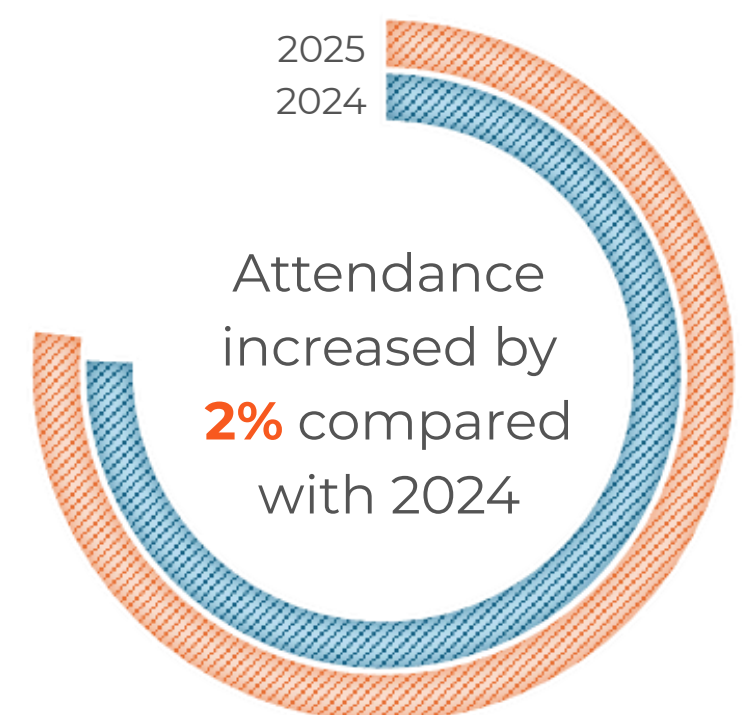


Figure 4: Number of attendees at the 2024 (63 people) and 2025 Special Interest Events (64 people).

We hope to grow even more over the next year. If there are services that you think would be good additions to the network, please do let us know. In the meantime, keep an eye out for information about our 2026 events and [review opportunities](#) on our [website](#) and in our fortnightly QNLD bulletin.

If you are not subscribed to the QNLD bulletin and would like to be, please [contact us](#).

EVENTS ROUND-UP

* Annual Forum

This year we had our first in-person Annual Forum since 2019! It was great to see so many people face-to-face. We received a lot of positive feedback after the event.

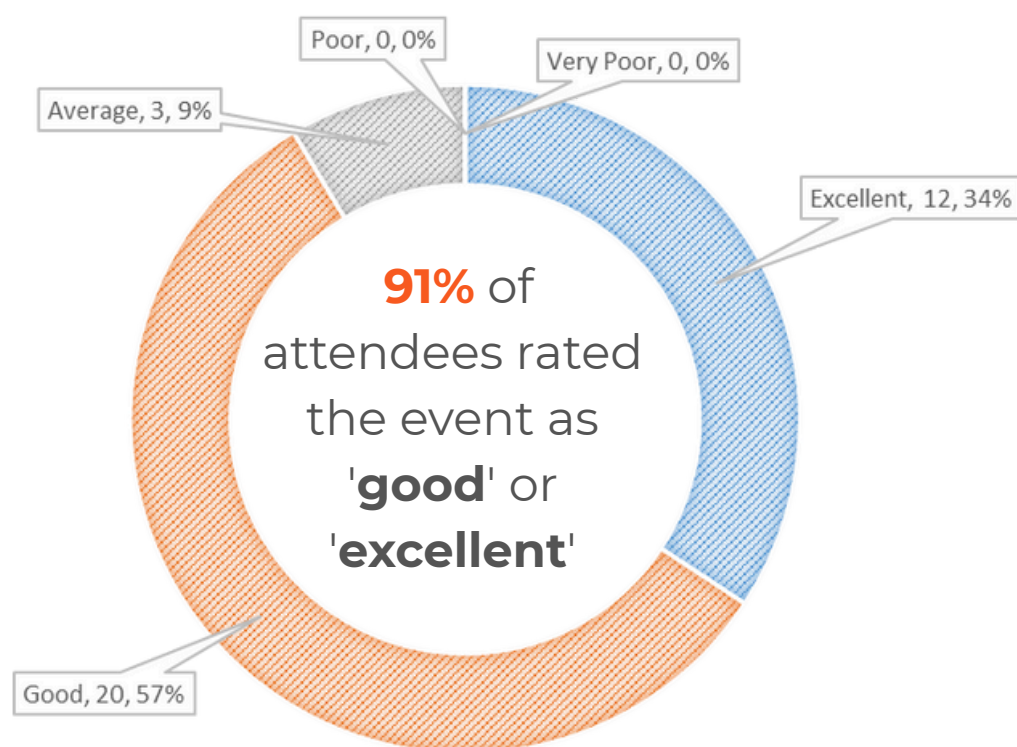


Figure 5: overall event rating. 53% response rate (35 out of 66 responses)

Many attendees said that they found the day useful and were particularly inspired by the talks on:

- the importance of research in quality improvement;
- reflections on accessible information, and;
- insights into the work being done at other trusts and organisations.

When we asked attendees what they enjoyed most about the event, they said:



We also took away some learning and suggestions for improvement that we will do our best to incorporate in future events.

* Special Interest Day

This year the theme of our special interest day was 'Living Well: Healthy Lifestyle Support in Learning Disability Services'. We welcomed attendees from across the country and heard talks from a range of speakers, including topics such as tackling avoidable deaths using recent findings from the LeDeR project, and the development of a co-produced checklist to assess the quality of annual health checks.

If you missed out, don't worry, recordings of our events on are available for members on YouTube. please [contact us](#) for the link. The QNLD Annual Forum and Special Interest Day will be back again next year. We look forward to seeing you all there!

SPOTLIGHT ON INNOVATION

* The Brook: Sensory-Informed Design in Practice

[The Brook](#) is a new purpose-built, 10-bedded inpatient mental health facility for people with learning disabilities and autism in South West England, as part of Devon Partnership NHS Trust.

The unit was designed in conjunction with Design in Mental Health, using evidence-based, sensory-informed principles to create a therapeutic environment that supports recovery and independence.

The building is a single-story residence made up of a series of linked corridors and distinct colour-coded zones to allow for intuitive wayfinding and different levels of stimulation.



The unit has a therapy/activity zone, a central social zone, and a treatment zone, as well as 10 individual flatlets, each with a bedroom, ensuite bathroom, living space and optional kitchenette.

Experts by experience were at the heart of the design and development process, from informing the features of the building and materials used, to conducting 'day-in-the-life' exercises to test the layout of the unit.

Special consideration was given to the unit's soundproofing and the use of colour and contrast in the design.



Despite a few weather-related delays, construction of the Brook was completed in June 2025, only 3 months behind schedule! The service started welcoming patients in August 2025.

You can find out more about The Brook and its innovative design [on the Pineapple Contracts website](#). Additionally, on 1 October 2025, the developers behind The Brook held a webinar talking through the process of building and setting up the unit. You can find the slides and recording of this webinar [on the Design in Mental Health website](#).

Images by **George Fielding**, from [PineappleContracts.com](#)

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2025

* Accredited Services

- Mid & West Essex Community LD Team - **Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust**
- East Community Team for People with Learning Disabilities - **Surrey & Borders Partnership NHS Trust**



What is Accreditation?

Accreditation is awarded to services who are meeting a minimum of 100% of our Type 1 Standards and 80% of Type 2 Standards.

- **Type 1** - Failure to meet these standards would result in a significant threat to patient safety, rights or dignity and/or would breach the law.
- **Type 2** - Standards that a service would be expected to meet.

* Spotlight on best practice

CTPLD East engages in a range of quality improvement projects and initiatives and there is a clear ethos around learning, improvement and development to support the best outcomes for people with learning disabilities and carers. Some of these QI projects include:

- Developing easy read care plans with clear planning/timetable detailing the journey from assessment to discharge and creating an accessible resource pack to support clinicians in developing materials.
- Developing groups such as, the keeping active mobility group for people with an early dementia diagnosis, offering community outing groups and healthy eating and weight management groups.
- Developing pathways around dementia, a joint SALT and OT pathway, an augmentative and alternative communication pathway and a pathway around accessing care homes and supported living accommodations.
- Utilising digital technologies to pilot video assessments and video appointments and future work around video pathways and video guidance around care and treatment, developing apps and increasing social media engagement.

OUR NEW STANDARDS

In April of this year we published the [5th edition of the QNLD standards for acute inpatient mental health services](#) for adults with learning disabilities.

The standards were developed in consultation with experts in the field and combine information from a variety of sources such as the CCQI Core Standards, national requirements, the 'Good Practice Principle' and research and other guidelines. You can find out more about how the standards were developed on [our website](#).

Alongside the standards, we also published a handy [document of key changes](#) for you to have a closer look at what's changed from the previous edition.

Some highlights are:

- Upgrading some standards from type 2 (expected) to type 1 (essential)
- Introducing new overarching themes for the standards
- Updating standards and guidance to align with the new College Core Standards

Developing any set of standards is a huge piece of work and we really appreciate the efforts of everyone who was involved in helping us pull it all together.



* Upcoming updates: 3rd Edition Community Standards

In September this year we also began the process of revising our standards for Community Learning Disability (LD) services. To kick off the revision process, we held a 6-week Online Consultation period from mid-September to the end of October. Members of the network were invited to comment on the current set of Community Standards and offer suggestions for improvement.

We also held a Workshop in November to discuss the feedback from the online consultation and start drafting the new set of standards for LD Community Services. We hope to publish the 3rd Edition Community Standards towards the end of Spring 2026.

SPOTLIGHT ON INNOVATION

* QNLD Peer Review Reimagined: Supporting the Development of New Services

QNLD Programme Manager, Amy Colwill, reflects on how QNLD has developed its processes this year...

It's been an exciting year for QNLD, we have welcomed new learning disability services to the network and continued to support our longstanding members.

With the support of our advisory group and feedback from members, every year QNLD evolves and expands its offer to meet the ever-changing landscape and needs of the learning disability services across the UK, and this year has been no different!

We have been really pleased to work with two brand new inpatient learning disability services within Lancashire & South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust (Water Meadow View) and Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust (The Kingfisher). These services have used the latest QNLD standards as part of their framework for designing and building their new units and this year have embarked on the peer review process as a way of reviewing where they are at with service development, as well to reflect and highlight successes and discuss challenges with an external peer review team.

Both teams completed the usual 3-month self-review process marking themselves as 'Met', 'Partly Met' or 'Not Met' against the QNLD standards and providing information on how they are meeting standards and/or how they plan to meet these standards once the service has opened.



Developer rendering of The Kingfisher, Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership (AWP) NHS Trust.

You can find out more about the Kingfisher and follow along with the development progress via a live webcam on [the AWP Trust website](#).



*Developer rendering of Water Meadow View,
Lancashire & South Cumbria (LSC) NHS Foundation
Trust from [Net Zero UK](#).*

*You can find out more about Water Meadow View on
[the LSC Trust website](#).*

In collaboration with the QNLD project team, both teams designed a bespoke peer review timetable based on what would be most useful to discuss for them as a team. Both timetables included a section on the environment and how it has been designed in line with QNLD standards, with one team showing the peer review team a virtual walkthrough of the new unit based on the architect's design which allowed for an immersive and interactive experience. What was evident in both peer reviews was the passion of the staff team and the attention to detail when designing a new inpatient environment from scratch.

Other sections of the peer reviews included detailed discussions on workforce and building the right team, reducing restrictive practice, accessibility and inclusivity, patient and carer experience and how digital processes can enhance the delivery of the service. Presentations allowed for host teams to describe and showcase their vision and the work already completed, as well as to gain constructive feedback from the peer review team on their work. Coproduction was at the heart of discussions of both peer reviews, and it was extremely positive to see how the lived experience voice runs throughout each workstream.



Both services will complete their second cycle of peer review next year when open. These peer reviews will be a great opportunity to see how the vision has turned into reality and support the teams with continuous quality improvement and their journey to accreditation with QNLD.

Good luck to both units with the opening of their units within the coming weeks and months!



BENEFITS OF BEING A PEER-REVIEWER

The QNLD Network are always looking for eager peer-reviewers to join the team! Becoming a peer-reviewer is a great benefit of membership with the QNLD network

Some of the benefits of being a peer-reviewer include:

- **Sharing good practice** - Peer-reviews present an opportunity to share best practice with other services to foster improvement UK wide.
- **Learning** - Attending peer-reviews is a great way for reviewers to take Quality Improvement initiatives or best practice being done by other services.
- **Connecting with peers** - Peer-reviews present the opportunity to meet like-minded professionals working across the UK.
- **Prepare for accreditation** - Attending peer-reviews provides valuable insight into the accreditation cycle.
- **Development** - Develop leadership by chairing sections of the review.
- **CPD Points** - CPD points are awarded to those who attend reviews.

The QNLD team offer in-depth peer-reviewer training which can be attended by all staff from member services. If you would be interested in becoming a peer-reviewer please sign up using the relevant peer reviewer training registration form:

- [Inpatient & Specialist Rehabilitation Services](#)
- [Community Services](#)

Here's what some of our current reviewers had to say about being a peer-reviewer:

"I have learnt a lot through this process and will encourage other teams to apply."

"It was a valuable experience to meet other team members to share learning."

"I enjoyed and valued the experience. lots of thoughts to take back to my setting."

"[I enjoyed] learning from each other."

SPOTLIGHT ON RESEARCH

* Development of Caring for People with Personality Disorder and Intellectual Disability (CAPDID) Training

Authors Research Summary

About 10 years ago a couple of psychologists and a psychiatrist in a Learning Disabilities Mental Health service in Kent started expanding their conversations about how to respond to numerous repeat referrals of people who are survivors of trauma. Trauma was not always mentioned in the referrals, but during the assessment it became clear that trauma histories was central to the current difficulties. The concerns raised by carers included risk-taking behaviours as well as difficulty forming safe, stable relationships with peers as well as caregivers.

Sometimes the person would find it too emotionally difficult to engage in psychological therapy. Medication was often not appropriate, and when prescribed to helpfully address specific symptoms did not address the underlying issues. So, we worked together to develop a training program based on psychodynamic principles to help staff better understand the dynamics being played out between caregivers and those in the receipt of care.

The training comprises 3 sessions each of 2 hours a week apart. It is primarily experiential with minimal didactic teaching, so it is important to have a maximum of 12 participants, with 3 or 4 people attending from each team, including the manager. We have found that the training is much more powerful when staff attend from different services as they are able to take the outsider position and challenge each other's narratives. The training is called CaPDID, which stands for Caring for People with Personality Disorder and Intellectual Disability.

The training is extremely well received, and qualitative research conducted by a trainee clinical psychologist as part of her doctorate (to be submitted for publication) has shown that up to a year later the training continues to have a significant impact on the ability of participants to understand and meet the needs of the people they support, within a trauma informed framework.

Analysis of the outcome measures we use (Maslach Burnout Inventory and Controllability of Beliefs) show that staff feel more empathy and less burnout after the training. We are working up a quantitative research bid to further demonstrate this.

We have also developed a version of the training which can be delivered outside services for people with learning disabilities - including physical and mental health settings, police, probation, education - to help them provide Trauma Informed services. This is called CaPLET (an attachment based approach to Caring for People with Lived Experience of Trauma) and is currently being rolled out to all staff in Kent and Medway Mental Health NHS trust.

We run a train the trainer session for anyone who would like to deliver CaPDID in their local services, please contact us for further details.



* CAPDID Data

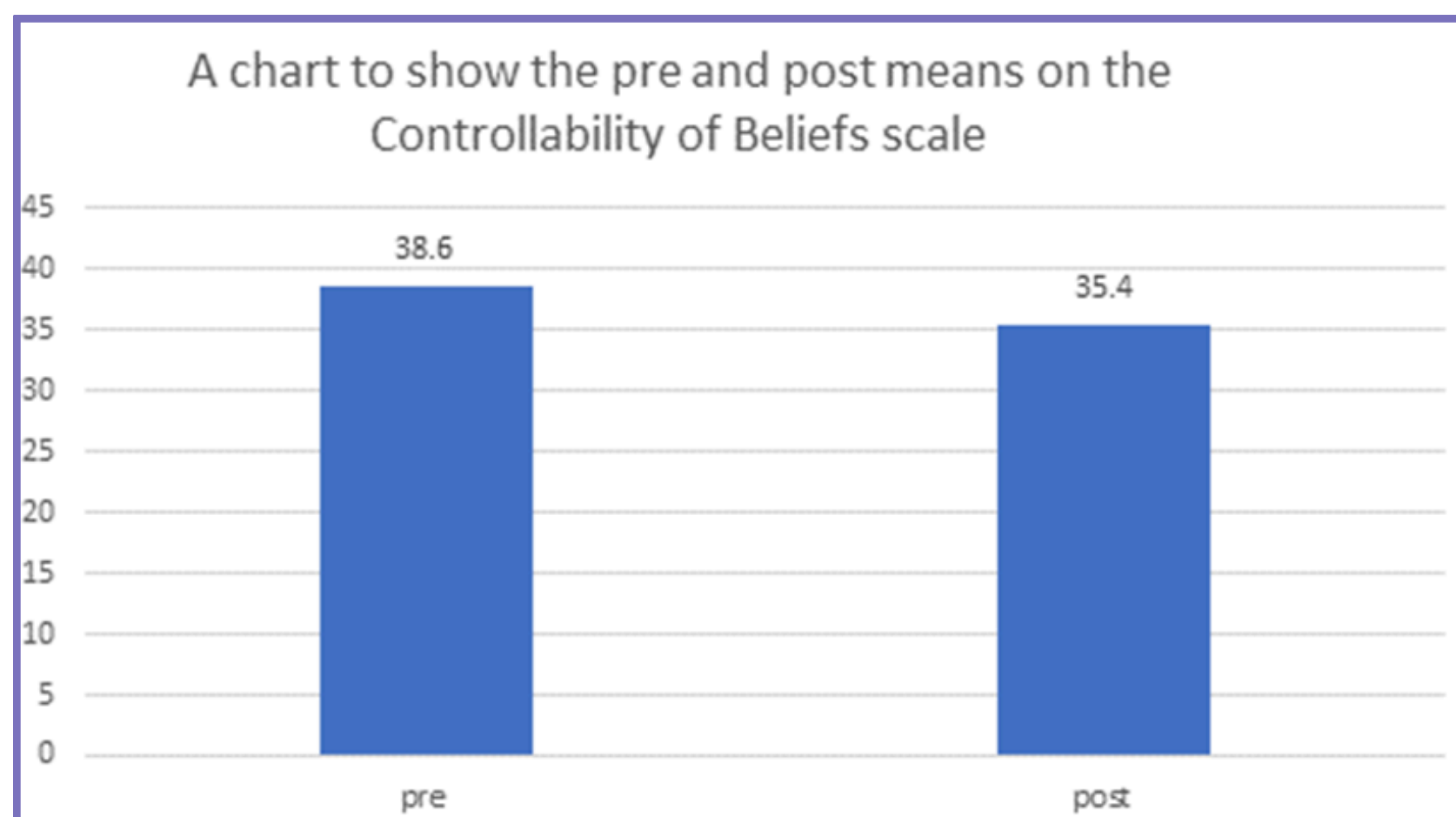
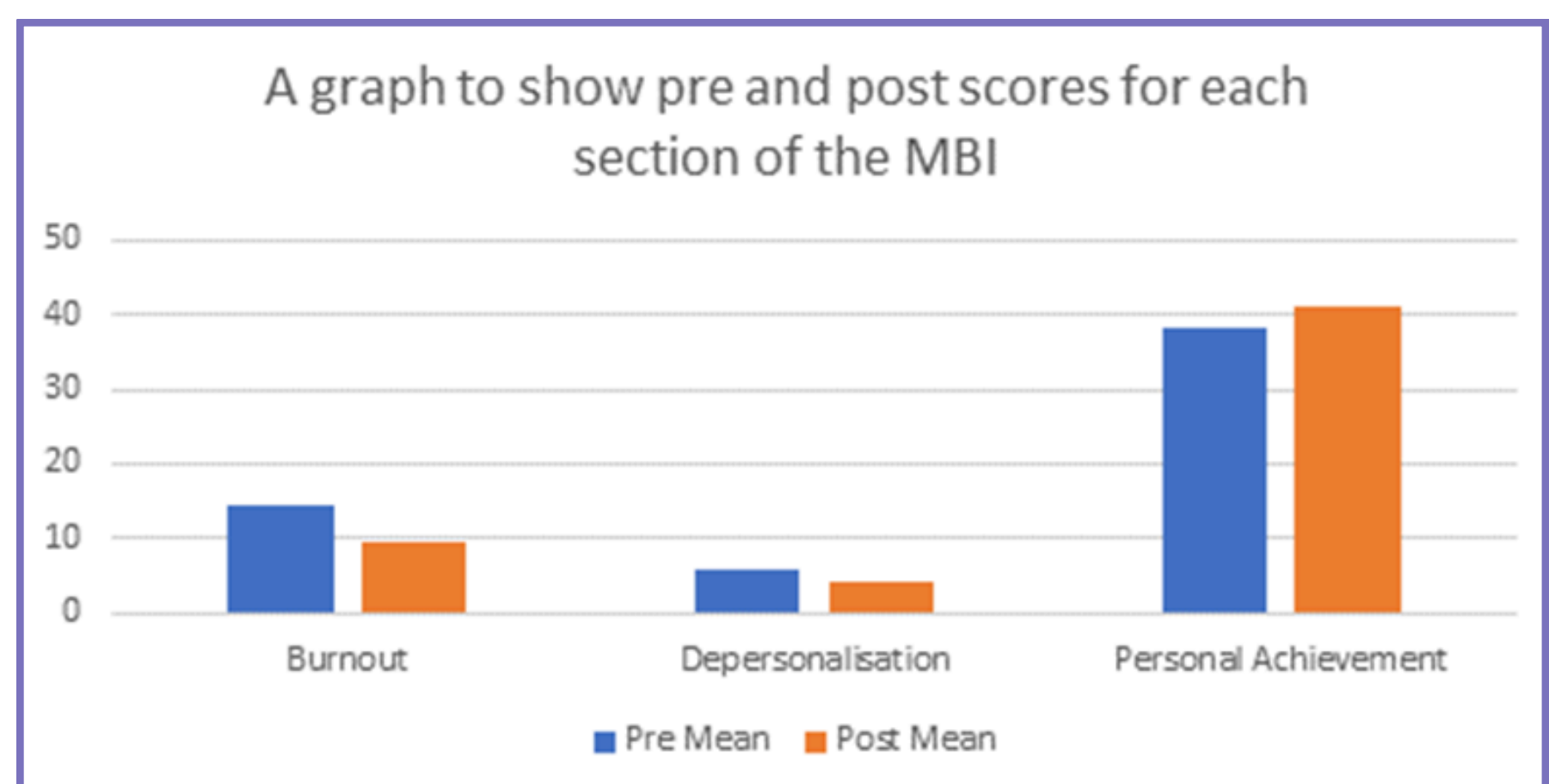


Figure 1: A graph showing the pre- and post-mean scores from the controllability beliefs scale.

A T-test was run between the pre and post measure groups, showing a significant difference between the two time points ($P=0.016$)

Figure 2: A graph showing the pre- and post-means scores from the burnout section on the Maslach Burnout Inventory.

Significant difference on: emotional Exhaustion ($P=.001$) and depersonalisation ($p=.02$)



* Contact the authors

If you are interested in finding out more about CAPDID and any related research, you can contact the authors below:

- **Emma Rye**, Consultant Clinical Psychologist and Approved Clinician, emma.rye@nhs.net
- **Anna Bodicoat**, Consultant Clinical Psychologist, a.bodicoat@nhs.net

MEET OUR ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE (AC)

Name:

Holly Wilson

Job title:

Advanced Specialist Speech and Language
Therapist & Doctoral Researcher

Service:

Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS
Foundation Trust – Norfolk Learning
Disability and Forensic services (Astley Court,
Broadland Clinic, Norfolk Forensic
Community Learning Disability Team)

**What brought you into your current job role?**

I currently lead HPFTs LD & Forensic Speech and Language Therapy services in Norfolk, however my career to date has been incredibly varied. I previously worked across neurology services including inpatient and community stroke, acquired brain injury, and major trauma. Seeking a new challenge, I moved into LD and forensic services; the best decision I've ever made. I've noticed significant parallels in terms of the complexity and intersectionality of physical and mental health challenges in this population. It's a real privilege to work with and advocate for this underserved community.

How did you come to be involved in the QNLD AC?

Since starting my current post I've actively engaged with the QNLD peer review process, gaining valuable insight into how other services operate and applying my learning locally. Over the years I've gradually become more involved with the Royal College of Psychiatrists as a whole, through presenting my clinical and research projects at college events (including the amazing QNLD annual forum!). When I saw the opportunity to join the accreditation committee in the newsletter, I jumped at the chance to become more integrated within the phenomenal RCPsych community.

What do you enjoy about being on the QNLD AC?

Being part of the committee is a hugely rewarding experience that's helped me grow both professionally and personally. I'm learning so much from other committee members whose depth of knowledge and expertise continually inspires me. The committee has given me a clearer sense of how to improve service quality, drawing on evidence-based frameworks and incredible examples of best practice from across the country. I'm also impressed by the committee's warmth and shared commitment to improving care and treatment. As one of two Speech and Language Therapists on the committee, I feel fortunate to represent my profession and to help ensure that our voice is heard in shaping LD services.



What is the AC?

The Accreditation Committee (AC) is made up of professionals from a range of disciplines within inpatient and community learning disabilities services who represent different areas of interest and expertise.

The AC reviews peer review reports and evidence from services and decides on accreditation status.

What are you currently working on?

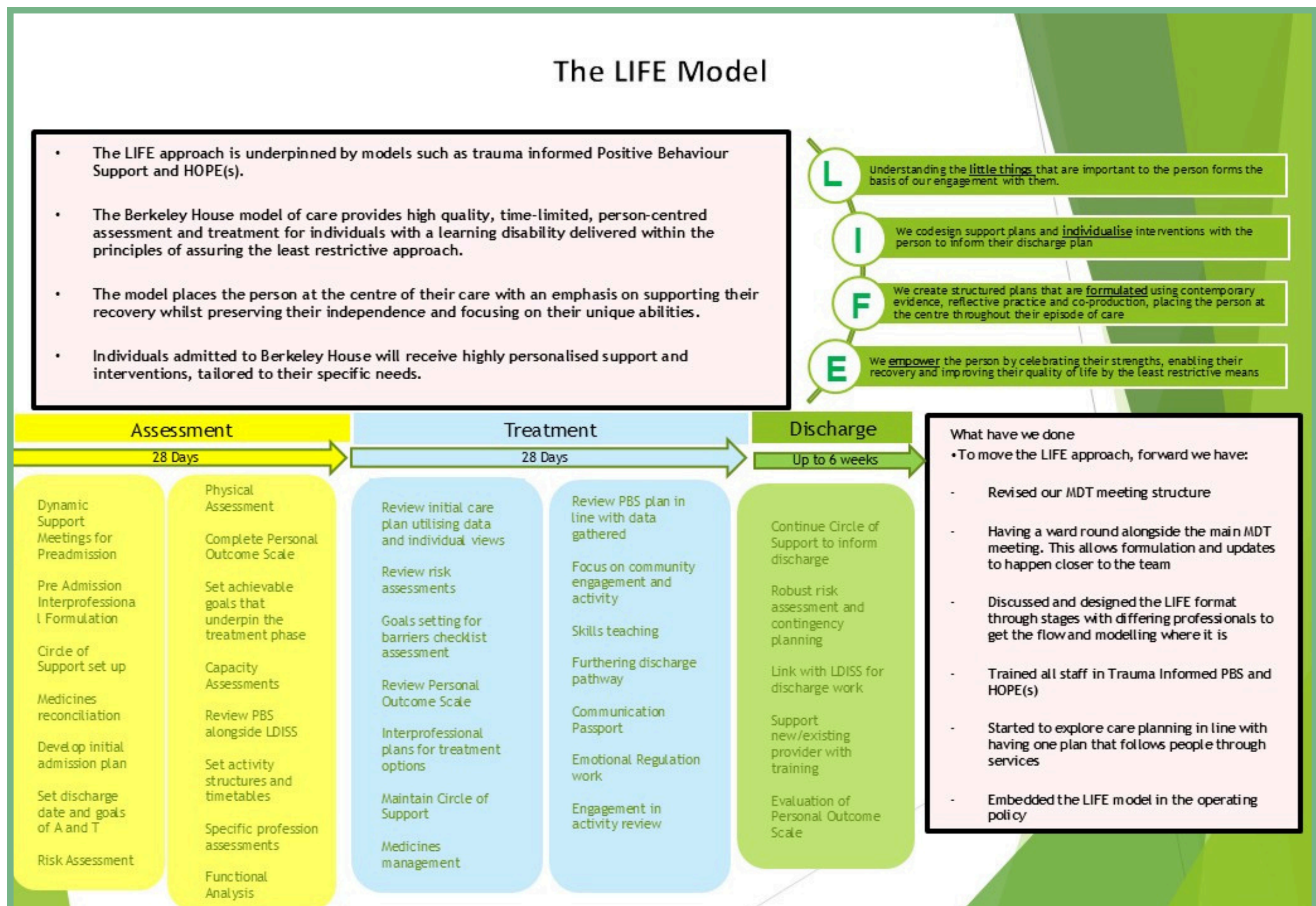
As a clinician and researcher, I strive to reduce the barriers to healthcare faced by people with communication difficulties or differences. In a clinical capacity, I'm leading various audits and service improvement projects focused on physical health in inpatient LD populations, including work on dysphagia, oral health, and communication-friendly healthcare consultations. My PhD research aims to improve the accessibility of physical health information for people with LD by critically appraising current approaches to health education and developing evidence-based, co-designed, and accessible information resources.

What would your ideal meal be?

It has to be fish and chips on the beautiful Norfolk coast!

SPOTLIGHT ON INNOVATION

* Berkeley House LIFE Model of Care



This poster explores the development of the LIFE approach. This reflects the development of an approach that explains the function of an inpatient assessment and treatment service for people with a learning disability. The LIFE approach encompasses trauma informed Positive Behaviour Support and HOPE(s) alongside a providing a clear patient pathway through the service. This approach is still currently being developed and worked on in line with service redesign.

This poster was developed by **Simon Eddy**, dev Advanced Nurse Practitioner for LD & Autism and **Dr Claire Delaney**, Clinical Psychologist at Berkeley House Acute Inpatient Unit, *Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust*

ART COMPETITION FINALISTS

✧ Our Winner:



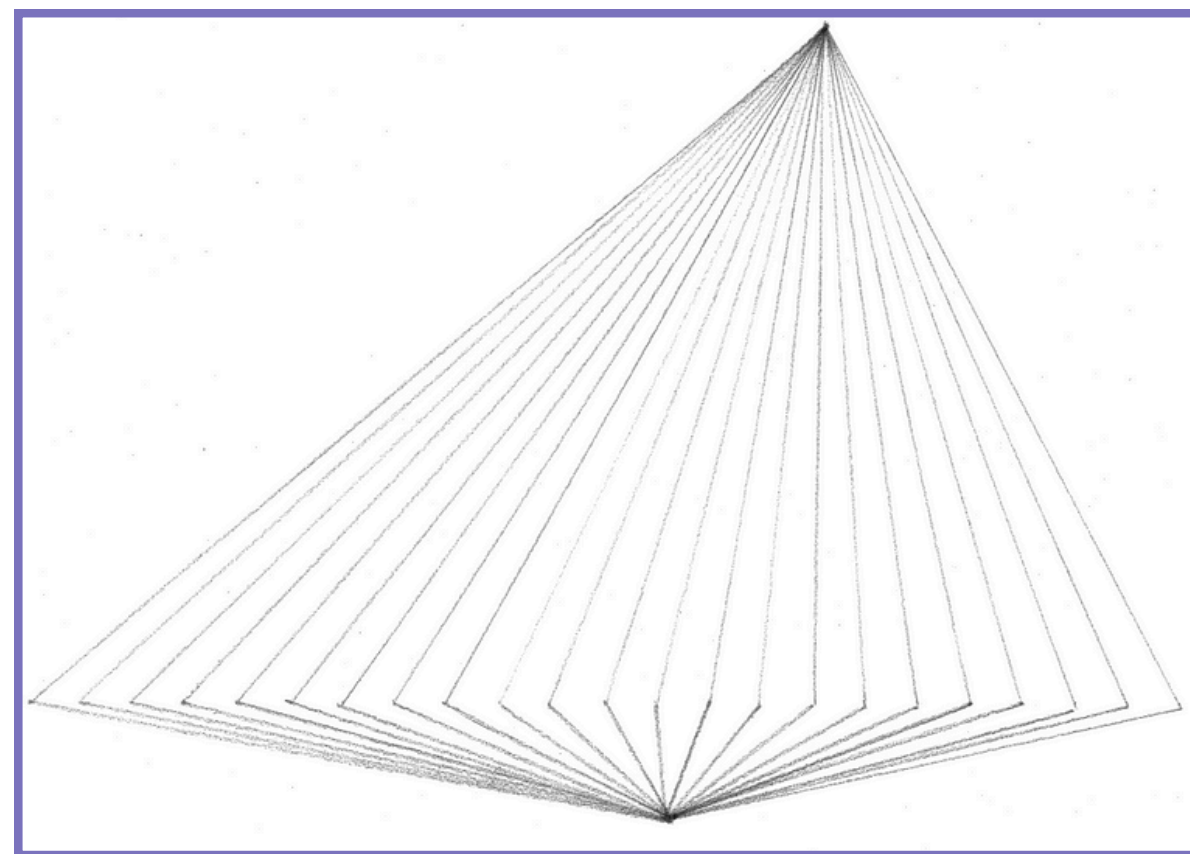
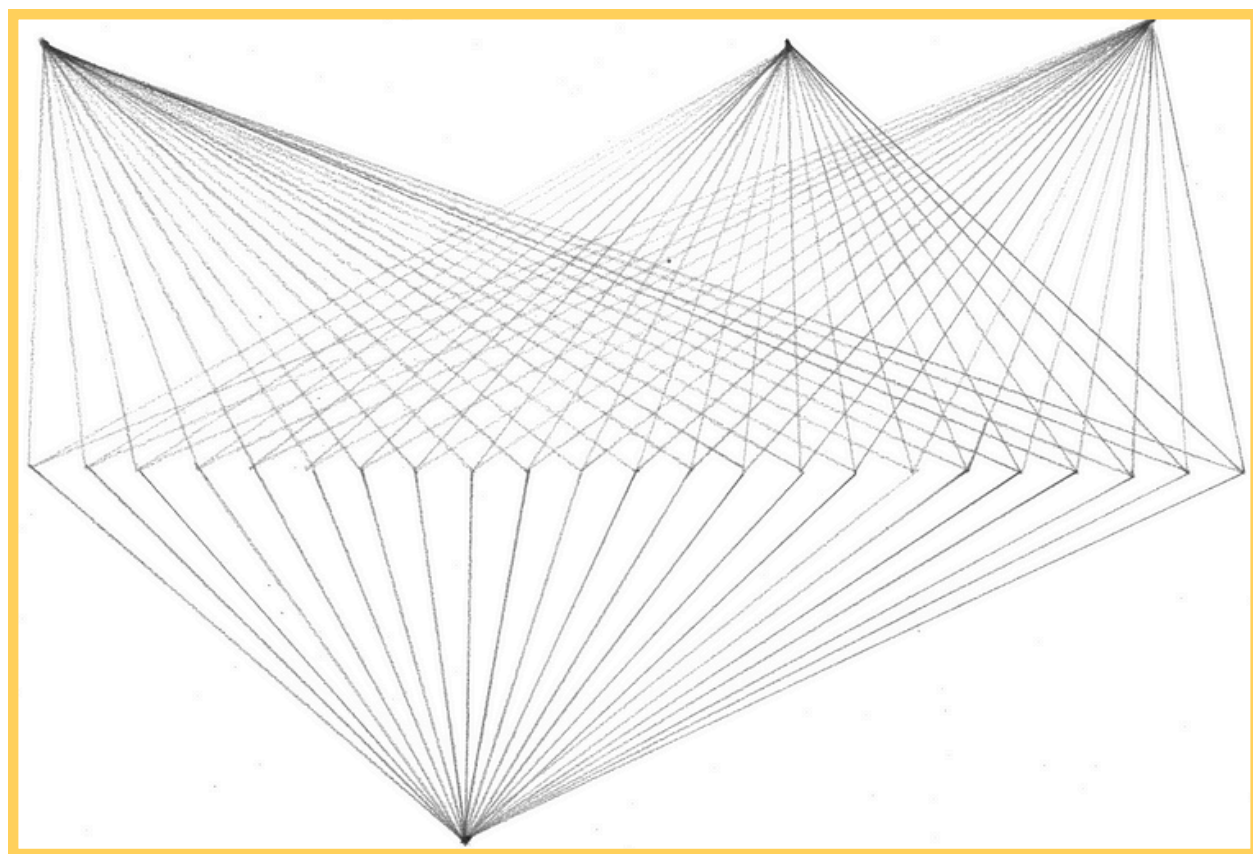
Title: *Coral* (2025)

By **Ray Sapak**, Essex Learning Disability Partnership (ELDP)

Why we liked 'Coral':

We really liked the vividness of the colours and the use of a range of textures. We felt that the piece did a great job of reflecting the variety of services and people that we work with as part of the Community services branch of QNLD.

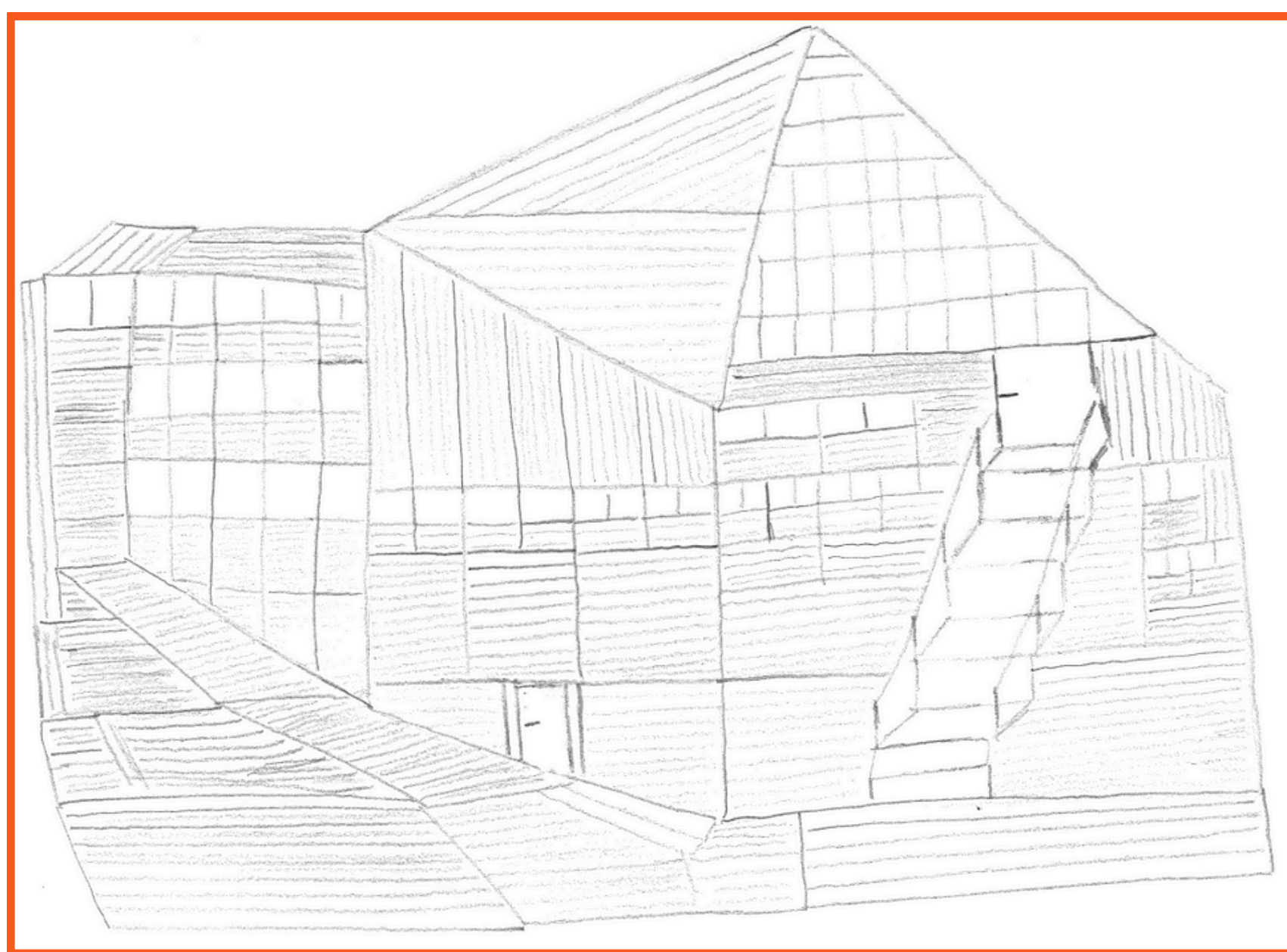
* Our Runners Up:



Title: *Open Book (2025)*

‘These are line art drawings. They are sketches to go onto bigger paper. I have an idea in my head, and I thought ‘how can I put that on paper?’. Art means a lot to me and inspires me to do more.’

- **PKB**, Little Plumstead Hospital



Title: *Elevation (2025)*

‘This is an architectural design of an elevated building from my mind; it's nothing I've ever seen before. Elevated buildings stand out. Architecture is all about problem solving, coming up with solutions to problems. I find architecture calming because there is always something new. Sometimes you can put it down for an hour or two, then pick it back up.’

- **RGB**, Little Plumstead Hospital



THANK YOU!

We'd like to acknowledge the following people for their amazing contributions to this year's edition of the QNLD newsletter:

Anna Bodicoat, *Kent and Medway Mental Health NHS Trust*

Emma Rye, *Kent and Medway Mental Health NHS Trust*

Holly Wilson, *Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust*

Simon Eddy, *Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust*

Dr Claire Delaney, *Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust*

Essex Learning Disability Partnership, *Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust*

Little Plumstead Hospital, *Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust*

&

Our Wonderful QNLD Advisory Group and Carer Representatives

Special thanks to all of the members of QNLD for all of your invaluable work. Thank you for reading this edition of the newsletter. Please keep an eye out for the next one!

If you would like to contribute to the next edition of the QNLD newsletter, please [get in touch](#) with us.