

North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust Board Briefing – Jan 2026 Board

This briefing aims to keep you informed of the discussions at our Trust Board.

To watch the recording and read the papers, please visit the [Board Meeting page](#) on the Combined Healthcare website.

Please note this briefing does not replace the official Board minutes, which will be published in due course and be available on the website.

Patient Story

The Patient Story featured Diverse Minds - a support group set up to provide mental health support, focusing on enhancing inclusion, education and support for people experiencing mental health challenges and neurodiversity. You can watch a recording of the Patient Story [at this link](#).

REACH Recognition Individual Award

This month's REACH Recognition Individual Award was presented to Deb Boughey, Young Adult Pathways & SEND Lead and Interim Service Manager. You can watch the recording of the REACH Award [at this link](#).

Chief Executive's Report

Dr Buki Adeyemo, Chief Executive, presented the report, which is available [at this link](#). Buki wanted to draw the Committee's attention to the Trust's Out of Area performance and its innovation being highlighted in Parliament. You can watch the recording of the CEO Report [at this link](#).

Chair's Report

The Chair's report to the Board was delivered verbally. Janet wanted to thank all our people who worked over the holiday period and during difficult weather conditions. Janet also wanted to emphasise the importance of people completing the NHS Pulse Survey.

The Board welcomed the news from the Chief Nursing Officer, Kenny Laing, that we had met the stretch target from NHS England for flu vaccination rates and had the highest levels of flu vaccination of any NHS mental health trust.

You can watch the recording of the Chair's report [at this link](#).

Questions from Members of the Public

There were questions from members of the public about (i) Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder, and (ii) Mounjaro. You can watch a recording of the discussion of these questions [at this link](#). N.B. Anyone can submit a question for consideration and discussion at the Board via the [Ask The Board facility](#) on the Trust website.



Safer Staffing Annual Report 2024-2025

Kenny Laing, Chief Nursing Officer, presented the report, which was approved by the Board. The Annual Report provides safer staffing data for all inpatient wards for the period of 2024/25. The report

- provides a summary of the safe staffing deep dive meetings which took place with each ward team and highlights the MHOST safer staffing findings
- updates the progress made since the six monthly review, reported in January 2025.
- includes recommendations for 2024/25 based on findings from individual ward reviews.

The full report is available in the [Trust Board bundle](#).

Ward 5 Garden Business Case

Liz Mellor, Chief Strategy Officer, presented the report. In May 2025, Combined Charity opened round one of the Harplands Grants Programme, seeking applications for grants of varying sizes to be funded via the legacy donation gifted by a former patient in 2024.

Ward 5 submitted an initial application to significantly update the garden space. The current garden is not suitable for the needs of ward 5 patients due to uneven services and narrow paths which present a falls risk and cannot be accessed by wheelchair users.

The total amount requested from charitable funds is therefore £110.19k, of which £17.12k is recoverable VAT. The current fund balance of the Harplands legacy donation is £268,162. The Board approved the Business Case.

Improving Quality and Performance Report (IQPR) Month 12

Eric Gardiner, Chief Finance Officer, presented the report, which showed strong performance. There is 1 special cause variation (orange variation flag) – signifying concern:

- Appraisal

There are 6 special cause variations (blue variation flags) – signifying improvement:

- Care Plan Compliance
- Risk Assessment Compliance
- Vacancy Rate
- Staff Turnover
- Sickness Absence
- Statutory and Mandatory Training

The full report is available in the [Trust Board bundle](#).

Finance position month 8

Eric Gardiner, Chief Finance Officer, presented the report which contained details of:

- The year-to-date surplus of £505k against a planned deficit of £285k, giving a favourable variance of £790k.
- The underlying financial position (ULP) of £948k deficit.
- Agency expenditure of £1,168k against a plan of £1,071k, resulting in an adverse variance of £97k. Medical agency must reduce to get back in line with the plan.
- Bank expenditure of £4,422k against a plan of £4,049k, giving an adverse variance of £373k. The Trust is forecasting an adverse variance against planned bank spend of £543k.
- The Trust is forecasting full achievement of the Trust £7.4m CIP target, with a total of £6.9m fully achieved / transacted, £0.2m fully developed and £0.3m opportunities identified.
- The Trust has spent £1,977k on capital, which is £944k behind plan.
- The cash position of the Trust on 30th November with a balance of £36.3m.

Finance and Resource Committee Assurance Report

Russell Andrews, Committee Chair, presented the reports from the meetings of the Committee held on 4 December 2025 and 8 January 2026.

The Committee received the report outlining the key risks, issues, progress and mitigations in relation to the Orbis project. It was noted that relationships with delivery partners have strengthened as a result of the implementation of formal governance arrangements. A clear and agreed timeline is now in place, with system go-live scheduled for summer 2026. The Committee would continue to monitor its levels of assurance around the project.

Updates were received relating to: IQPR, Finance Position, ICS Finance, Financial Planning, Cost Improvement Programme, SLR, Estates and Capital, Business Opportunities and Strategic Partnership.

The revenue business case to deliver the required Oliver McGowan training was approved.

Quality Committee Assurance Report

Prof. Pauline Walsh, Committee Chair, presented the reports from the meeting of the Quality Committee held on 4 December 2025 and 8 January 2026.

Challenges remained within the system, winter pressures hitting early. High levels of flu and RSV were impacting on their flow and therefore ambulance waiting times. The BMA announced further industrial action for five-days from 17 December.

Preparing for storm Goretta had been a key focus of concern with business continuity planning being undertaken with contingencies in place. This included pressures on the Mental Health Liaison Team, with all patients being seen and partners being kept informed.

The Trust received a prevention of future deaths report, also known as a regulation 28 report or PFD report on 18th November 2025.

Out of Area placements

There were 21 reportable out of area patients from Acute Inpatient services currently, with additional patients within other local provision. There were 15 Clinically Ready for Discharge. Actions to address this challenge remain underway and the Trust had reached out to other systems to support patients who are from out of area services and accessing a bed within our local emergency department.

A request was made for a more detailed written report to be presented to the committee next for more detailed discussion.

People, Culture and Development Committee Assurance Report

Martin Evans, Committee Chair, presented the report from the meeting of the Committee held on 5 January 2026.

The Committee received high level preliminary results from the 2025 national staff survey. Results indicate that the Trust has maintained its position in the top quartile of results when compared to peers, in addition to an increase in response rates when compared to 2024 results. Focused work on engaging and improving bank experience is evidenced through improved response rates and outcomes. Further results and analysis will be scheduled once the national results have been released post embargo.

The Committee welcomed a staff story from a Health Care Support Worker who had raised concerns on their working experiences through the Dear Buki route. The story articulated disparity of treatment over a course of years, alongside challenges experienced in their desire to transition their medical qualifications from their home country to pursue a career in medicine and support with gaps in skills across the Trust. The Committee was assured how the early engagement with directorate leadership team resulted in a positive resolution and were further assured on the commitment to developing a localised approach to overseas healthcare qualifications. Learning from this staff experience has been built into the Trust People Plan and the approach of early engagement with directorate leadership will help to inform other mechanisms for colleagues speaking up.

The Committee agreed to undertake a detailed review of its risk register, noting areas of potential duplication, whilst using the opportunity to apply a risk tolerance in line with Board development.

The Committee reiterated its responsibility in seeking assurance on progress with the Trust's workforce plan in the context of system partners.

Charitable Funds Committee Assurance Framework

Russell Andrews, Committee Chair, presented the report from the meeting on 1 December 2025.

The quarterly finance report included a reported fund balance of £322,000 as of October, with £21,000 income and £16,000 expenditure, including bank interest and donations. It was noted that a small number of dormant funds had been closed to support administrative efficiency. There are now 40 individual funds.

Consent items

The following items were presented as consent items and can be read in the [Board papers bundle](#)

- Levels of assurance
- Trust Board Attendance Report

Any Other Business

The Board meeting closed at 12.35pm

Date and time of next meeting in public is 10.00am, 12 March 2026. To access papers and meeting link, please visit <https://www.combined.nhs.uk/about-us/our-board/board-meetings/>