

Trust Board Briefing

A summary of what was
discussed at the September
2026 Board Meeting.



A note from our Chair and Chief Executive

The Chair and Chief Executive emphasised the Trust's commitment to safe, compassionate and person-centred care, highlighting the importance of listening to the experiences of patients and staff to drive learning and improvement. Reflecting on Suicide Prevention Day and the patient experience story shared at the meeting, they reinforced that high-quality care depends on understanding people's experiences, acting on concerns and maintaining a strong culture of inclusion, safety and continuous improvement.

The Board also recognised the contribution of staff across the organisation, including congratulating Dave Norcup, recipient of the monthly staff recognition award, for his leadership in improving data quality and performance intelligence to support better decision-making and service improvement.

Both the Chair and Chief Executive highlighted the Trust's ongoing focus on workforce resilience, equality and performance, recognising current pressures. The Board reaffirmed its commitment to tackling inequalities, strengthening lived experience involvement and ensuring the Trust remains well prepared for future challenges.

Janet and Buki

Chair and Chief Executive

Board Highlights and Reflections

What stood out most at Board this month was the strong focus on culture, inclusion and learning; alongside continued attention to operational performance and workforce resilience.

The powerful lived experience shared by Simon, reflecting on his recovery journey and role as a peer support worker, shaped wider discussions about compassionate care, active listening and how patient and staff voices influence decision-making.

The Board also reinforced its commitment to anti-racism and inclusion through approval of a clear organisational approach, approved plans to prepare for winter pressures; and reviewed assurance that overall quality, performance and financial delivery remain stable.

Whilst recognising ongoing challenges around sickness absence, workforce resilience and demand pressures; members were encouraged by improvements in recruitment, workforce equality measures and the Trust's continued commitment to learning, improvement and delivering safe, inclusive care.



People and Culture

On the back of the two recent reviews of Maternity care, the Board reflected on organisational culture; recognising the value of staff, patient and service user voice, Board-to-Team engagement and stronger integration of lived experience into decision-making.

Progress in workforce equality and the approval of anti-racism commitments demonstrated the Trust's continued focus on creating an inclusive and supportive workplace culture.



Quality of Care

Discussions highlighted that delivering safe care requires more than compliance, with a strong emphasis on learning, curiosity, timely intervention and understanding people's experiences.

The Board received assurance on safe staffing and safeguarding; noting that staffing levels remain safe overall while recognising the challenges associated with sickness absence and workforce pressures.

The recent reduction in out of area beds was discussed with assurance being provided that plans remain in place to manage this closely in partnership with the System and Local Authorities.



Performance and Finance

Overall performance remained stable, with significant progress reported across most quality and operational indicators despite ongoing pressures in community access, liaison demand and workforce metrics. Financial performance remained on plan, with strengthened savings delivery arrangements providing confidence in the Trust's financial sustainability and oversight. The Board noted the progress on cost savings and thanked staff for their contribution towards our targets.



Governance

The Board reviewed its assurance arrangements and confirmed that only one principal risk currently remains outside the Trust's risk tolerance, with targeted actions in place to address this.

Members considered how assurance is obtained across committees; emphasising the need to triangulate information from multiple sources, including staff and patient feedback to gain insights as well as assurance.

Governance oversight was further strengthened through reviews of committee activity, action tracking, policy updates and improvements to Board-to-Team engagement processes.



Clinical Services Update

Clinical services continue to focus on improving patient access, reducing out-of-area placements and strengthening mental health crisis and emergency care pathways through partnership working across the system.

The Board reviewed performance pressures in community services, liaison demand and specialist pathways including autism and ADHD services; whilst noting that overall performance remains stable across most measures.

Preparations for winter pressures are also underway, with plans approved to ensure services remain safe and responsive during periods of increased demand.

Decisions and Assurance

The Board approved the Trust's winter plan and endorsed the approach to implementing anti-racism commitments.



North Staffordshire
Combined Healthcare
NHS Trust

Areas of Board Attention

The Board's attention as ever is centred on ensuring the Trust remains safe, inclusive and resilient in the face of increasing service demand and workforce pressures.

Particular focus was given to reducing out-of-area placements, improving mental health crisis pathways, addressing sickness absence, maintaining safe staffing levels and preparing for winter pressures across the system.

Members also spent considerable time discussing culture and organisational learning; including how concerns raised by staff and service users are identified, triangulated and acted upon.

The Board reinforced its commitment to strengthening lived experience input, embedding anti-racism principles and improving workforce equality outcomes.

From an assurance perspective, the Board reviewed the organisation's key risks, monitored quality and performance indicators, and sought assurance that financial delivery, patient safety and governance arrangements remain effective, with targeted action in place where risks require further mitigation.