



Board of Directors

subject	Chair's Report
Date of meeting	19 th July 2022
author	Jonathan Wells
purpose	For Discussion

At a strategic level, this past quarter has seen The SUN Network consolidate its position within the new NHS commissioning structure. Since last week, Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) are history – replaced by Integrated Care Systems (ICSs). Mental health services will have their own Accountable Business Unit (ABU) with a system for monitoring and improving mental health services which will build on the strengths of the previous model.

Lois and I now have a leading role in championing co-production across the Mental Health ABU. This means that as well as delivering the services which we are commissioned to provide, we increasingly act as co-ordinators of other groups of people with lived experience of health challenges or disabilities. For example, we are soon to be deciding with our ICS colleagues what representation of or by people with lived experience is needed on each of the new Boards, including the Boards for Older People with Mental Health Issues where Natasha now has a role and the Board for people with Learning Disabilities and/or Autism.

I like this idea of a family of voice organisations with us playing a leading role in making sure we learn from each other and amplifying our voices.

Internally, I was delighted to chair our AGM on 22nd June where we took the opportunity to showcase some of our projects, including our work to enable people who have had substance misuse issues to train new police officers, and our project to develop personalised care and support plans for people with severe mental illness. For me it was striking to hear how therapeutic people had found it to be part of such activity and perhaps to be heard for the first time by professionals after years of being ignored or dismissed. I am still preoccupied by wanting us to achieve as much as possible in getting services changed and improved wherever necessary, but the event was also a big reminder for me about how enjoyable and rewarding it is for volunteers with lived experience to work alongside our team on projects.

As a (shortly to be retiring) Non-Executive Director of Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough I was pleased to see us out in force at Healthwatch's Championing Access conference on 7th July. Our presentations were well received and there was a strong sense of solidarity amongst voice organisations at the event. I think "the ball is now in our court" when it comes to helping people communicate their experiences in such a way that the necessary improvements can be made.