

**South Tees Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust**

The James Cook University Hospital  
Marton Road, Middlesbrough, TS4 3BW  
Switchboard: 01642 850850

**North Tees and Hartlepool  
NHS Foundation Trust**

University Hospital of North Tees  
Hardwick Road, Hardwick  
Stockton-on-Tees, TS19 8PE  
Telephone: 01642 617617

**Response to the Healthwatch Tees Valley &  
Healthwatch County Durham Report**

**“Staying With People – What Lived Experience Tells Us About Mental Health Support”  
(April 2026)**

Date: 20 April 2026

Dear Natasha,

University Hospitals Tees (UHT) would like to thank Healthwatch Tees Valley and Healthwatch County Durham, and all those with lived experience who shared their stories within this report. We recognise the courage required to speak openly about distressing experiences and are grateful for the insight this provides.

The themes identified in this report – including the need for continuity, clearer ownership, safer discharge, trauma-informed care and compassionate crisis responses – strongly align with the priorities within our Group Mental Health Strategy, developed jointly across South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust and implemented from April 2025.

**What We Are Doing**

**Improving continuity and transitions:**

Our strategy is focused on strengthening the integration of physical and mental health care, particularly at points of discharge and transition, with clearer communication and closer working with partners to reduce people being passed between services.

**Strengthening compassionate, trauma-informed care:**

We have committed to a phased approach to embedding trauma-informed care across UHT,



supported by a dedicated working group, targeted training and the establishment of a Lived Experience Advisory Panel to inform policy, training and service development.

**Improving safety and crisis responses:**

Suicide prevention remains a key priority, supported by the Teesside Suicide Prevention Plan 2024–29. The Right Care Right Person approach has been implemented across Group services to ensure people receive the most appropriate response and to reduce inappropriate escalation.

**Reducing restrictive practice:**

We are aligning restraint and rapid tranquilisation guidance across the Group to promote consistent, least-restrictive practice, with updated policies currently in development following audit and CQC feedback.

**Building staff capability:**

Psychology-led mental health training continues to be expanded, with over 1,200 training places delivered during 2025/26, alongside bespoke ward-based sessions and Trust-wide awareness events.

**Supporting children, young people and families:**

We are strengthening joint working with CAMHS and partners, reviewing pathways (including eating disorders), improving de-escalation approaches in urgent care, and enhancing the care environment for children and young people.

**Working with VCSE partners:**

We recognise the critical role of voluntary and community organisations in supporting people in crisis and recovery, and are committed to strengthening partnership working and more joined-up support.

**Looking Ahead**

We recognise that many of the issues raised are longstanding and require sustained, system-wide effort. During 2026/27, our focus will be on embedding trauma-informed care, improving discharge safety and follow-up, enhancing staff confidence and capability, and continuing to work closely with people with lived experience and partner organisations.

We welcome ongoing dialogue with Healthwatch and remain committed to ensuring lived experience continues to shape meaningful improvement in mental health care across University Hospitals Tees.

Yours sincerely



Emma Nunez  
Chief Nursing Officer  
University Hospital Tees