



# Bev Thornton

## Patient Experience and Involvement Coordinator

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### **What is your job title, what does it involve day-to-day and how long have you been working in that role and/or at the Trust?**

In January my job title changed to patient experience and involvement coordinator. Before this I was a recovery and social inclusion worker, and back when I first joined the Trust I was a service user development worker, based in the Crisis Resolution Home-based Treatment Service. I've been working in the Trust now for nearly 15 years. My day-to-day work involves all the preparation for the SUN/SUNRAYs (our Service User Network groups) which I organise and Chair. We have service users chairing two of the SUNRAYs. We have SUNRAYs groups in each of the three hubs (West Leeds, East Leeds and South Leeds) and we are hoping to have one soon at The Becklin Centre. We are also looking into a Young SUN. I attend meetings to represent the service users' voice, based on feedback we get from people at SUN. I deliver training sessions on recovery to staff, service users and carers, as well as to third sector organisations. I'm supporting people who will be involved in interviewing for new staff, and also arrange and support service users to attend the Board of Directors meetings.

### **Why did you choose to work for the NHS?**

I started out having accessed services when I was an inpatient at Roundhay Wing 32 years ago. When I was seeing the Parent and Child Unit in 2002 I began talking to people about their experiences of accessing secondary mental health services. I was able to offer support and advice based on my own experiences. I also learnt valuable coping strategies from talking to others. I ended up volunteering there and when I saw a paid job I applied and was successful! My previous work was a disability rights worker at the Citizens Advice Bureau.

### **What's your favourite part about the job?**

I love meeting people so I really love the SUN/SUNRAYs where I meet a variety of people who have accessed services. I love asking for people's views so we can make recommendations for improvements of services. I also think we have some great caring staff and it's meeting likeminded people that makes me really enjoy coming to work. I

am passionate about my work and love it!

### **What's the most challenging part about your job?**

I guess fitting everything in to the day as my list of things to do seems to get bigger and bigger! It can sometimes be challenging when someone who is acutely unwell gets upset and they personalise their problems and raise them at SUN. You have to remind everyone to treat each other with dignity and respect and only reveal what they feel comfortable with.

### **Tell us about:**

#### **a time you were really proud of your work**

There have been a few but probably when I worked on a Trust template for Advance Statements. I looked at other Trusts throughout the country and thought we should have one so I adapted one. I took this to various meetings and the Trust adopted my template and guidance. I was nominated for a Care Programme Approach award and received a Highly Commended award for best planning in care. The Trust received a Kitemark too.

#### **your fondest memory of working at the Trust**

This is hard to answer as I have many fond memories! I guess it was the relaunch of SUN. A long time ago people were paid for attending and as soon as this stopped we were down to one member! My colleague Anne and I took over and relaunched it in 2012. It was a success and we now have over 120 members, with around 20 to 30 on average attending each meeting. I really enjoy working in partnership with staff, service users and carers.

#### **What do our values of integrity, simplicity and caring mean to you? How do you show these values in the work that you do?**

I always work towards the Trust values, treating everyone with dignity and respect and doing the best I can for everyone. I have always been non-judgemental in my approach to people. In terms of keeping things simple, I am always advocating for the use of plain English and for people to stop using acronyms. I am caring, as the majority of staff are, and I always ensure I make time for people, to listen to their story, and treat them with compassion and kindness.

#### **What message would you give to inspire the future NHS workforce in your area of work or in general?**

My message would be to continue to involve people in the redesign of services 'nothing about me without me' and let's have some real co-production, keeping people informed throughout the process and working collaboratively for the benefit of everyone.

#### **How has the NHS made a difference to you/how have you seen the NHS help people?**

Personally, the care I have received over the past 32 years has just got better and better. People now have a voice whereas 32 years ago you were told what to do. I have seen staff working relentlessly to help and support others. What we need is acknowledgement of all their hard work!