A word from our Chief Executive

I was delighted to be appointed as the Interim Chief Executive at Together for Mental Wellbeing in March 2018, and again upon my confirmation as the new, permanent Chief Executive in May 2018. On behalf of our senior management team and all staff at Together, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Liz Felton, Together’s previous Chief Executive, for her 11 years of service to the organisation.

As Together’s new Chief Executive, it is my pleasure to welcome Dr. Carol Cole as our new Chair of the Board. Carol was appointed in October 2017, after an extensive recruitment process, and brings great experience and expertise to Together, having been involved in the leadership, design and delivery of strategic change throughout her career. I am delighted to be working with her to take Together onto the next stage of its growth and success.

During the year, we sold our national office on Old Street in London, as the building was no longer fit for our purpose. In March 2018, we made an offer on new premises in Lambeth North, London, and in April 2018 were pleased to secure our new national office at Walnut Tree Walk. At the time of writing, the building is being fitted out to meet our requirements and we will be moving into the premises in early July 2018. Walnut Tree Walk’s greatly improved, modern, pleasant facilities will benefit our staff, volunteers, service users and visitors, and is in line with our aspiration to remain an important, national presence within the sector.

This year we also began our strategy review, which will continue throughout 2018/19, to enable us to develop an ambitious and effective five-year plan to guide us through 2019-2024. I would like to thank all staff, volunteers, Trustees and service users who have so far shared their valuable insight and ideas with us through the strategy consultation, and I am looking forward to launching our new strategy in 2019.

Service user involvement and leadership has continued to be at the heart of everything we do. This year, we started our involvement in the independent review of the Mental Health Act, through supporting service users affected by this legislation to share their experiences via organised focus groups. Our internal grants scheme, which funds service user involvement initiatives across Together, has supported a range of diverse projects this year which have benefitted 176 service users. Our peer support offer has also expanded, and a survey of the people who received peer support revealed that 84% of respondents reported an
improved ability to manage their mental health, with 82% feeling more hopeful about the future.

2017/18 has brought many successes and new beginnings for Together. We have launched the Norfolk Integrated Housing and Community Support Service – a major new contract commissioned by Norfolk County Council and delivered in partnership with St Martins, Great Yarmouth and Waveney Mind, Norwich and central Norfolk Mind, and West Norfolk Mind. We were also delighted that our Berkshire West Your Way service (previously Reading Your Way) secured further funding for the next two years, enabling the staff to continue supporting local people experiencing mental health issues.

Our Clinical and Recovery Focused Accommodation Service (CaRFAS) in Wellingborough has gone from strength to strength, attracting referrals and commissioning interest from across the country and a televised media appearance on the BBC.

We have launched several new advocacy services in the North of England this year, including our new Advocacy Together Hubs in Rochdale, Wakefield and Knowsley. Our advocacy services have also enjoyed contract extensions in Kirklees, Tameside, Stockport, Oldham and Nottinghamshire, which is firm evidence that local authorities and partners recognise the benefits of our model.

Our criminal justice services have continued to develop, as we explored new opportunities to work with Probation and welcomed our new Criminal Justice Peer Supporters onboard. We also delivered training to criminal justice professionals on the specific needs of women, an initiative commissioned by the Prison Reform Trust. An evaluation of the training identified the benefits to women caught up in the criminal justice system when professionals are more aware of their specific needs and concerns. Our Pathways service in York has gone from strength to strength, securing further funding from local agencies – a positive reflection of the achievements of the service in intervening with people in crisis as a result of their mental distress.

In a landscape that remains challenging for many mental health and social care organisations and for the charity sector more broadly, I am inspired by the fantastic staff at Together, who possess the vision, dedication and passion to continue to transform lives, by delivering vital support to people experiencing mental distress. I would like to thank our Board, our staff and our volunteers for all their hard work and successes this year, and to recognise the thousands of amazing service users who we work alongside on their recovery journey.

Linda Bryant
Chief Executive

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Service User Involvement and Leadership

We have supported our services and departments to create their own plans to further enhance and embed service user involvement and leadership within their day-to-day work, and have been impressed by the broad range of initiatives that have been developed and are being worked towards across the organisation. We support staff to learn from each other about what works with regards to service user involvement and leadership, the challenges that can crop up along the way and how these can be resolved.

Some examples of service user involvement and leadership across the organisation this year have included:

- Service users across Together services being involved in planning, setting up and co-hosting local engagement events.
- Service users from Swale Your Way achieving their football coaching badges.
- Service users giving valuable input into updating information / welcome packs.
- Increased involvement in Your Way service user meetings and in residents’ meetings in our accommodation services.
- Development of our National Steering Group (NSG), comprised of nine service users who provide a service user perspective to strategic issues within Together.
- Many staff attending service user involvement training, showing a positive attitude to developing service user involvement across the organisation.

We have worked with our partner organisations within the Norfolk Integrated Housing and Community Support Service to ensure that this new service meets specific requirements and expectations in relation to service user involvement and leadership and peer support.

Our internal grants scheme has continued to provide additional financial support to service user involvement. The Grants Scheme Committee is comprised of a panel of three service users, who review applications on a monthly basis. This year, the internal grants scheme has benefitted 176 service users.

Some examples of service user involvement initiatives that were funded by the internal grants scheme include:

- **Art and music groups:** There have been a number of art and music projects led by service users. 15 service users have benefitted from initiatives like this, which bring people together and help to reduce isolation.
• **Technology:** The grants scheme is currently benefitting 12 service users through the approval of technology-related initiatives, such as a new laptop at Wandsworth Your Way which has enabled service users to gain valuable IT skills and new-found independence.

• **Conferences:** 20 service users have benefitted from funding that enabled them to attend conferences, providing an opportunity to not only learn new things but be involved in passing on that learning to other service users.

• **Groups and Events:** At one of our services in Sussex, service users identified a need for a local LGBTQ+ support group. As well as providing an autonomous, safe space for members to talk about issues affecting them, the group has provided an opportunity for service users to practice useful skills such as minute-taking.

• **Gardening:** These projects continue to be popular and are a great way for people to get outdoors. At Lawn Court Accommodation Service, six service users have been actively involved in maintaining their garden and growing fruit and vegetables. Two planting trugs were purchased, enabling service users with less mobility to participate – 17 residents are now able to enjoy this garden even more so. At Swale Your Way, 12 service users have been maintaining their allotment, which is going from strength to strength.

• **Training:** 60 service users have so far benefitted from the Anger, Stress and Emotional Resilience training course, facilitated by a volunteer. In true collaborative fashion, the volunteer has gone on to train two more people to share their learnings from this course.

Our refreshed and revitalised National Steering Group (NSG) have now received a comprehensive induction programme and have provided a service user perspective to some key strategic issues within Together – such as the development of our new strategy, the appointment of a new Chief Executive and our move to a new national office. The NSG have also influenced our future approach to physical and mental health, by visiting a range of services and speaking with other service users about this very important issue.

We were able to support the Independent Review of the Mental Health Act by running a series of focus groups that explored people’s experiences of being detained under this legislation and being subjected to Community Treatment Orders.

We have worked with service users in residential settings and supported housing to explore issues around medication, including self-medication, and how we can improve organisational approaches to this from a service user perspective.
Peer Support

Our model of peer support continues to go from strength to strength. During the past year, this has been extended to our Liaison and Diversion service and our Clinical and Recovery Focused Accommodation Services (CaRFAS), so that some of the most vulnerable people can benefit from this invaluable source of support.

More people can now access peer support in groups and by telephone. We are ensuring that it is relevant and accessible for people with a range of disabilities, in addition to mental health issues.

We have increased the number of people who access peer support and this reached 685 people in the past year, who reported the following benefits:

- 90% reported improved confidence
- 84% reported improved ability to manage their mental health
- 86% reported feeling more in control
- 82% reported improved social life and support networks
- 92% reported feeling more accepted
- 82% reported feeling more hopeful about the future

We have developed and distributed a series of service-user-led self-management resources that can be accessed by anybody using any of our services. These have focused on what service users themselves find helpful in relation to:

- Anxiety management
- Arts and culture
- Confidence-building
- Exercise
- Food
- Hobbies and leisure
- Mindfulness
- Relaxation and stress reduction
- Sleep management

We have also been able to raise the profile of the organisation and share our expertise with the wider mental health community and beyond, by presenting our work at several events and conferences throughout the course of the year.
Support in the Community

When people are experiencing distress, it can be hard to know where to turn, or what support is available.

Our community support services are easy to access, give people choice and control over how they are supported, and provide high-quality information and signposting to local resources.

Our Your Way services work alongside people towards the goals that matter to them, and support them to build social connections and skills so that they can achieve greater independence and move away from paid support in their lives.

Over this past year, we have provided community support to over 1,000 individuals through our Your Way model.

We were delighted that our Berkshire West Your Way service (formerly called Reading Your Way) successfully secured continued funding for the next two years from Reading Borough Council and NHS Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs). This will enable the service to continue its decade-long history of improving the lives of thousands of local people who experience mental health issues.

This year also saw the launch of the new Norfolk Integrated Housing and Community Support Service – for which we are the lead provider, working in partnership with St Martins, Great Yarmouth and Waveney Mind, Norwich and Central Norfolk Mind, and West Norfolk Mind.

As a result of this partnership, we look forward to delivering better outcomes for people in Norfolk experiencing mental health issues, and are excited to deliver new aspects of the service including expanded peer support and group activities.

We also continued to support thousands more service users through our other community support services, including floating community support and our Southwark Wellbeing Hub.
Together recognises that having a suitable place to live is an extremely important factor in recovery from mental distress and so we provide a range of services that support individuals to live in the accommodation which is right for them.

We offer residential care placements, crisis beds, supported housing and a wide range of support for people who are maintaining independent tenancies.

This year, we have consolidated the learning from the evaluation of our Progression Together model, to inform the review and realignment of our accommodation services in Hampshire.

Progression Together is our model of personalised, accommodation-based support. It is designed to help people with complex and challenging mental health needs move progressively towards increased independence, at a pace that’s right for them.

Our Clinical and Recovery Focused Accommodation Service (CaRFAS) in Wellingborough has continued to deliver positive outcomes for service users and has attracted referrals and commissioning interest from across the country. Our CaRFAS model provides high-quality support with the aim of preventing avoidable admissions, and supporting recovery and “step down” for people who have severe mental health problems and significant risk or safety issues.

We have continued the review of our forensic accommodation model, to build on the success we have enjoyed with our York Road Accommodation Service in Sutton. This service is a High Support Unit offering specialist support to people with complex needs and forensic backgrounds. The service offers a comprehensive support package designed to enable service users to take control of their lives and move on to independent living.

This year, we also undertook a wholesale review of our pricing strategy of all our spot funded services, to ensure that we provide the best value for money within a sustainable financial model.

We have also developed a property management group which makes sure that we provide good quality accommodation to our service users, and that we are accountable for our responsibilities to our tenants and licence-holders.
Mental Health and the Criminal Justice System

We have continued to successfully deliver our Liaison and Diversion services across police and court settings in London, in partnership with NHS Trusts. Our Liaison and Diversion practitioners assess the needs of vulnerable individuals in magistrates’ courts, crown courts and police custody settings, working closely with a wide range of partners to ensure that these individuals have access to the right health and social care services.

We have also continued to work with prolific offenders and serious group offenders to ensure that their mental health and social care needs are addressed, improving their overall outcomes and increasing their chances of moving away from the criminal justice system.

Together’s Forensic Mental Health Practitioner (FMHP) Service works within the National Probation Service (NPS) to provide assessment and therapeutic interventions where people have a primary mental health need and may also be experiencing a number of other vulnerabilities, including personality disorder, learning disability and substance or alcohol misuse. We have explored further opportunities to work with probation, including continuing to develop our specialist services for women and young adults.

In January 2018, the Prison Reform Trust published an evaluation of the training that we delivered to criminal justice professionals on the specific needs of women. We were delighted that the evaluation found that 88% of participants said that the training helped them to effectively develop an understanding of how the needs that women have may affect them while detained in custody (police and/or court), with 71% saying that their knowledge of the support structures, pathways and services for female service users had increased.

We have also delivered training to the Metropolitan Police in London on how best to support people with mental health needs who come into contact with the police, and this training has been very positively received.

Our York Pathways service has gone from strength to strength, securing ongoing funding from the office of the local Police and Crime Commissioner. The service continues to provide intensive support, working alongside people experiencing crisis as a result of their mental distress, to avoid their use of emergency services.

We were also excited to welcome onboard our new Criminal Justice Peer Supporters within our Liaison and Diversion services. These are volunteers with personal experience of mental health issues and involvement with the criminal justice system, who will use their lived experience as a tool to support others on their recovery journey.
Advocacy

We offer statutory Independent Mental Health Advocates (IMHA), Independent Mental Capacity Advocates (IMCA), Care Act Advocacy and generic advocacy services nationally.

This year, we were delighted to launch our new Together Advocacy Hubs in Knowsley, Wakefield and Rochdale, which have been commissioned by Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC), Wakefield MBC and Rochdale MBC respectively.

At each Hub, a Volunteer Coordinator has been training local people with lived experience of mental health issues to join the Hub’s volunteer scheme and become vital members of the delivery team. Volunteers are also encouraging Self Advocacy to individuals in the community. In addition, the team are offering learning programmes to existing and new peer groups who want to make a difference to the way they receive care and support.

We were also pleased that Kirklees MBC, who we have been delivering advocacy services to for over a decade, requested that Together continues to deliver IMCA services for a further extended period. Additionally, we were delighted to be asked to extend our IMCA service in Tameside, Stockport and Oldham for a further three years.

Together led a partnership with Speak Up Warrington, a small local charity, to deliver all types of advocacy in Warrington, as initially commissioned in December 2016. The service enjoyed a successful first year of delivery, and we then supported Speak Up Warrington to continue to deliver the contract independently. Warrington MBC and Together are keen to support local agencies to remain in the wider marketplace, to grow and develop further.

Together’s advocacy services have continued to enjoy key involvement with the Greater Manchester protocol to deliver advocacy for clients, funded by a neighbouring Local Authority and placed in Rochdale, Tameside, Stockport and Oldham.

Our advocacy services have also continued to have representation in the involvement of planning changes regarding the Greater Manchester devolution process for Health and Social Care Commissioning services.

In addition, we have provided representation at the Safeguarding Children and Adults Forum in Rochdale and Wakefield.
Together also secured a one-year contract extension for Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust’s statutory and generic advocacy provision for their Forensic Division. This contract includes Rampton High Secure Hospital and associated medium and low secure services, ensuring that we remain on the frontline of delivering Independent Mental Health Advocacy to people detained under the Mental Health Act.

Our advocacy services have undertaken work to engage service users who are assessed as having no capacity to make specific decisions, using the 4Pi National Involvement Standards. We are in the process of developing further ways to support the voice of service users to improve service delivery.

The new model of the Together Advocacy Hub (now in Wakefield, Knowsley and Rochdale) has supported the engagement of local people with lived experience of mental health issues, their ability to lead in making changes to local services, and their involvement in the work of Together’s Service User Involvement Directorate.

The Together Advocacy Network has developed further during 2017/18, with the successful meeting of services across the North West and East of England, and has secured further funding in order to employ more advocates to join the organisation.

Developments are also underway to create improvements in training and learning, as Statutory Advocacy sees many changes within a small space of time.

Our Advocates have continued to receive a high level of compliments and positive feedback regarding their ability to make challenges on behalf of their clients, while also enabling the Decision Makers to support the clients to take risks, in respect of the clients’ wishes and values.
Priorities for 2018-2019

In the coming year, we will:

1. Support the most vulnerable people and those facing greatest stigma, by providing the next step in supporting people moving from secure or locked services, including offering peer support to all service users in our Clinical and Recovery Focused Accommodation Service.

2. Expand services for people with mental health needs who are also involved with the criminal justice system or those people at risk of such involvement, including maintaining our Liaison and Diversion provision and developing its peer support offer, and engaging with NHS England commissioners.

3. Continue to provide quality accommodation with support at a fair price and with recovery-based outcomes, including assessing all our accommodation services against Together’s values, ethos and Progression Together principles, and achieving a Good rating in all CQC registered services.

4. Provide support to the most vulnerable people in secure, residential and community settings through instructed and non-instructed statutory and generic advocacy provision, including retaining our Advocacy Charter Mark.

5. Reach more people in a community setting in a way that promotes independence, peer support and leadership, including reaching 1,250 service users per year by 2018/19 in our Your Way services and 1,500 service users per year in our Community Support services.

6. Strengthen, sustain and grow our services and the organisation, including the development of a new five-year strategy.