

**ELFT Ability Network Newsletter**  
**June 2023**



Welcome to ELFT Ability's newsletter. Staff from across the Trust can share their experiences of disability in the workplace for mutual support and to influence ELFT's culture around disabled staff. We know from speaking to members in our sessions and survey that the focus for the network over the next one year is to increase awareness, connection and communication.

**What is ELFT Ability?**

ELFT Ability is an open network that aims to bring together disabled staff and trainees along with our allies. Our membership includes staff with hidden disabilities as well as long-term health conditions or if you are simply interested in supporting those with disability in the workplace.

**ELFT Ability Learning: Cost of Living**



On 30 May we held our session with ELFT's Cost of Living Coordinator Susan Downing to talk about 'life hacks' to save money without compromising your health and wellbeing needs.

This was an opportunity to hear more about Susan's work with the trust and also share your experiences about the added costs of being disabled, often known as 'disability tax'.

Useful links are

[Prepayment vouchers](#)

[Cost of Broadband](#)

[Energy costs](#)

and see [this link](#) for more information for both service users and staff.

Feedback was very helpful, with many useful ideas which Susan will take away – but also raised general concern about the anxiety and impact on mental health the cost of living crisis is causing which we will discuss with the Trust's wellbeing team.

**Future ELFT Learning Event: Living with Diabetes**

**6 July 2023, 12:00—1:00pm (TBC)**

Colleagues from Diabetes UK, the UK's national charity supporting children and adults living with



Diabetes will join us to talk about what is one of the most common and potentially severe conditions.

**3<sup>rd</sup> August 2023, 12.00-1.00pm**

Charlie Hart, is hosting a session about children's mental health. The title of the session is: Identifying and supporting mental health needs and opening up conversations



**Purple Space**

We are members of PurpleSpace, a national network of disability employee networks. Our membership gives 20 spaces with direct access to information, resources and events. Please let Norbert Lieckfeldt (norbert.lieckfeldt@nhs.net) know if you would like to have one of these accounts.

**Meet the team:**



Dr Mohit Venkataram,  
the Trust's Executive  
Director for Business  
Development and the  
Executive Sponsor of  
ELFT Ability



Norbert Lieckfeldt,  
Network Co-Lead  
Corporate  
Governance Manager,  
Trust HQ



Laura Pisaneschi,  
Network Co-Lead  
Senior Lead Clinician,  
Health E1



Monica Ali, Support Network  
Coordinator  
Quality and Performance Coordinator, City  
and Hackney

Please contact the network on  
[elft.ability@nhs.net](mailto:elft.ability@nhs.net)

## Future events

1st Thursday of each month- ELFT Ability network seminar/webinar (monthly themed event)

3rd Thursday of each month- ELFT Ability network catch up meetings

Both meetings start at 12, seminars 12-1 and catch up meeting 12-12.45. Times may change to suit the speakers

## Other network information

**“We are our own authors of our own chapters, don’t let anyone rewrite your chapters for you, allow it to be read so you can be understood. “- Monica Ali**

We want to hear from you, those of you who wish to encourage, empower and inspire anyone and everyone by sharing with us your stories, quotes, links, and events to have it published in our monthly newsletter. Get in touch by contacting us via [email](#)

## New Network Co-Lead

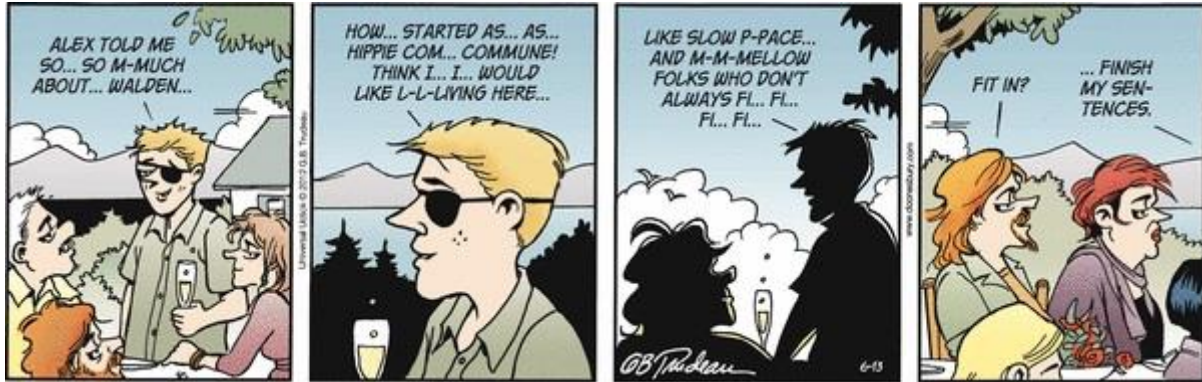


**Here’s our new Network co-lead Norbert Lieckfeldt outlining his thoughts for the coming two years:**

I was delighted to be appointed as the second ELFTAbility lead working alongside Laura and following in the footsteps of Claire. Having been involved in the Network since I started working for ELFT in 2018 I can see the huge strides it's made since those early days.

By way of a bit of background - I am the Trust's Corporate Governance Manager which means I manage the Trust's membership function and support its Council of Governors to be as impactful and effective as possible.

I started out as a public Governor for Newham since 2012 - in my previous life I was Chief Executive of the British Stammering Association for nearly 20 years, a small national charity supporting adults and children who stammer. As a person who stammers I have a keen interest in neurodiversity (as the causes of stammering are neurological), communication disabilities and those disabilities that are often hidden.



Disability is possibly the most intersectional of all conditions for which ELFT provides staff network - whether it's women, men, older people, younger colleagues, LGBTQ+ or BAME colleagues - they can all be or become disabled.

So I would like to work more closely with all of our networks, with networks across our footprint (eg NELFT Disability Staff Network or BartsAbility) but also link up with good practice on supporting disabled colleagues outside the NHS but we must not lose that safe space for colleagues to share when things are difficult.

I really look forward to working with Laura, Toitei, Monica and Mohit and everyone who wants us to help ELFT become the best employer we can be.

### **New Support Network Coordinator**



Hi All,

I have been appointed as the support network coordinator for ELFT Ability Network, I am so proud to be part of such an amazing team, and a network that I feel so passionately about, having my own lived experience, and working for ELFT for 3 years now, It is really important for me to be involved in this network not just to identify and embrace our differences but to also influence our organisation by sharing our capabilities.

What are love about this network is that there is more to just being confident with your disability, rather it means that as an organisation we are proud, and encouraged to employ staff with disabilities and provide support throughout the journey in their career development.

This network creates a safe space to share, listen, and support , allowing you to meet a wide range of amazing staff working across the trust, and covering various hot topics which may be of benefit to everyone. I will be taking over the position from our lovely Charlotte Hart who has contributed tremendously to this network, we only wish her the best in her future endeavours.

Together we are striving to connect the dots, so keep a look out as ELFT Ability is ready to make lots of NOISE!!!.

### **And finally:**

ELFT are sharing a series of personal and inspiring stories from our ELFT staff in the build up to Men's Health Week.

Join Ken Batty, ELFT's Senior Independent Director, as he shares his powerful story of transformation and the importance of men's health awareness.

Read his article now on the ELFT website: <https://lnkd.in/eisnGKs8>

### **Social Media**

#### **Facebook**

ELFT Ability has a closed Facebook group exclusively for disabled staff and those with health conditions to come together for peer support. You can find us on Facebook by searching for “ELFT Ability” or join by contacting Laura Pisaneschi for more information



#### **Twitter**

ELFT Ability are very active on Twitter, raising awareness of disability and employment issues and much much more. Join us for the conversation at @ELFTAbility.

#### **Microsoft teams**

If you are not a member of the ELFT Ability team network and would like to join please contact [elft.ability@nhs.net](mailto:elft.ability@nhs.net)

If you have any queries, suggestions or news for ELFT Ability, contact [elft.ability@nhs.net](mailto:elft.ability@nhs.net)

