

CONNECTED

Summer 2019

Health and wellbeing

What does it mean to you?

Saving lives
A regular superhero

Healing paws
Four-legged therapy

Art of age
Dover smART

The theme for this issue is health and wellbeing. We've explored how we combine physical and mental health to help our patients and staff across the trust. We've taken a look ahead and investigated how technology will help in a clinical environment in the not-too-distant future on page 28. We've spoken to a very special nurse, who saves lives both at work and in his volunteer role with the RNLI, where he braves the waves on page 4. We've also met people who have gone to great lengths to improve their physical health, which has helped to combat their mental ill health, on page 10 and page 18.

Of course, we cannot forget our furry four-legged volunteers who use their unconditional acceptance and empathic abilities to help each and every person that needs them, on page 14.

We hope this issue gives you some indication of the holistic way mental ill health can be treated. It's not just about medication. It's finding the right treatment for the right person. It's finding what works for you.

Contact us by email: kmpt.communications@nhs.net

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The Samaritans are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week and provide confidential, non-judgemental emotional support.

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WELCOME

I'm delighted to be able to welcome you to this issue of Connected. Creating the perfect day for our staff is an important part of helping to ensure our patients receive brilliant mental and physical health care. We need to look after our health and wellbeing so we can look after the health and wellbeing of our patients. Ultimately, our aim is to help prevent illness and have healthy and happy staff.

There are so many initiatives across the trust, it was difficult to choose just a few to share with you, but let's not forget we have touched on the topic in previous editions. In the Summer 2018 issue, we looked at the development of yoga for patients. In the Spring 2019 issue, we enjoyed our trip to the hidden delights of Webbs Garden. So what makes this issue any different? We don't want physical and mental health to be seen as something we occasionally talk about; it needs to be considered every day and should always be considered together. If you have poor physical health, this

will impact on your mental health. If you have poor mental health, this may impact on your physical health. As part of the transforming health and social care in Kent and Medway group, we are all working together to help encourage and support better health and wellbeing, provide improved and sustainable health and care services for our communities and help people prevent ill health – both mental and physical.

Here at KMPT, our health and wellbeing group works hard to run our staff MOT clinics, improving them each and every time. At the clinics, you can check your BMI, blood pressure and cholesterol, get stop smoking advice, visit ONEYou, have a flu vaccination, speak with your Freedom to Speak Up Guardian or Ambassador, visit our staff networks (BAME, (dis)ABILITY, Faith, LGBTQ+), speak to one of our consultants about mindfulness, speak with your union representative and this year, we introduced financial advice. Staff

can also access occupational health and confidential counselling services.

For the 2018 staff survey, the trust committed to paying £1 into a health and wellbeing fund for every staff survey completed. We raised £2,000 and are currently making the final decision about what to spend it on. I can promise you one thing, it will certainly be something to inspire wellbeing!

I look after my health and wellbeing through my passion for riding horses, walking my dogs and taking part in the occasional charity event. My favourite, of course, is Cloisters 2 Oysters and I'm already looking forward to the next one in 2020. Tell us, how do you maintain your health and wellbeing?

Contact us at kmpt.communications@nhs.net

Sandra Goatley
Director of Workforce
and Communications

Nathan Vasudaven



The Littlebrook
Hospital

RNLI
Lifeboats

RNLI

NATHAN
VASUDAVEN
DEPUTY ASSET MANAGER

A REGULAR SUPERHERO

SAVING LIVES ON LAND AND AT SEA

Guaranteed there is one ringtone Nathan Vasudaven will never have on his mobile.

It's the old telephone one that is remarkably similar to the emergency signal that sounds when Gravesend lifeboat is called out. It instantly triggers his heart to beat a little faster and makes him feel he should be running somewhere.

The 28-year-old Deputy Amberwood ward manager in Dartford has proudly been a member of the RNLI crew for nine years.

He followed in the yellow wellies of his father Bhargawa, a GP who also served as the station's medical advisor. Hearing stories from the 26-mile stretch of the river (Canvey Island down to the Thames Barrier) that the team is responsible for patrolling, the psychology student felt he wanted some of the action.

He jests about the fact he likes a uniform and having a speedboat as a company vehicle – "I can't deny going down the pier in full gear is kind of cool!" – but the greatest appeal for him is undoubtedly helping people.

His commitment is two 12-hour shifts a month as a minimum. Rather than the pager system operated in other areas by the charity lifesaving service, volunteers spend the time at the station, waiting for the adrenalin-injecting chimes to sound. And they do – 122 shouts in 2018 to give you an idea.

He said: "We man the station and keep up our skills during our shift.

We try to sleep on nights, but you don't very well, waiting for that phone to ring. It is always a nervous time when you go to the loo!

"It is a two-minute turnaround from call to launch of the boat (a four-crew Atlantic 85 to be precise) so you have to be quick getting into your kit. We will not necessarily know what we are going to. The helmsman will brief us on the way to the job."

Unfortunately, there is the draw to water when people are contemplating harming themselves.

He said: "If people do go into the Thames, we are there very promptly to help. We can't always change the outcome, but we offer the best chance we can."

Nathan is the go-to casualty care specialist on shift; a role sometimes made more challenging by the confines of the working conditions (roughly a metre-square in the bow of the boat atop a choppy tide for CPR takes some skill).

He has always been a water baby. Bobbing around in his pyjamas in swimming pools as a schoolboy to secure his lifesaving badges led to scuba adventures in Gozo, gaining his rescue diver qualification. Confidence yes, but also the all-important respect; unseen dangers beneath the surface, the unpredictability, the tides. He needs to be proficient with the equipment, the radio, his team and effective and vital communications with close partners, police and ambulance crews.

Often the emergency services have a heart-warming animal story and Nathan is no exception. The rescue of a foal, which had slipped down a mud bank and was then returned to its panicked mother, is his.

Just celebrating his fourth anniversary as a qualified nurse, Nathan said he adores his team at Littlebrook and the work they do.

He said: "I was the victim of bullying as a child and it took its toll on me mentally, but I came out of it thankfully thinking I was fine and not the one with the problem. It also planted a seed of interest in me about the whole concept of the human psyche and behaviour and that is why I pursued the career I did.

"With my RNLI role, it's great to challenge yourself. I feel very comfortable working on the wards, but it is good to push yourself to use your skills in different environments. The lifeboats are a family and it is a genuine honour."

Nathan's other passions are his wife Freya, a senior staff nurse at Foxglove ward in St Martins in Canterbury, and dachshund Ralph, who has also proved he has (somewhat tiny) sea legs by sailing aboard the Gravesend lifeboat and apparently enjoying the wind in his ears.

Nathan has prompted a review of ward first aid grab bags, based on what is made available on the lifeboat.

WALKING TO HEALTHIER LIVING

It's an undeniable fact, no-one wants to stay in hospital. At Priority House, staff are taking part in a pilot to get patients out of the ward during their stay and into nature. A short walk, a bit of fresh air, enjoying bird song and having a casual chat with those around us – sounds perfect. And that's what Julie Delahaye, Occupational therapist lead for the Acute care group, thought when she was asked if she and her occupational therapy team would like to bring the Green Beacon Walking Project pilot to KMPT.

Being admitted as an inpatient can be incredibly stressful but crucial in someone's care when they are in crisis. The moment a patient is admitted, staff are immediately thinking of their discharge and what care and treatment it will take to get them there. This will involve many things and will be different for each patient, but ultimately, no-one wants to stay in hospital.

At Priority House, many sectioned patients use their permitted S17 leave to walk to the shop, but there is little to do without going too far or if you don't know the area. "Patients get given S17 leave when the time is right and they are encouraged to go out and get some fresh air. Many patients do not know the area, so finding something more meaningful than popping to the shop can be difficult."

The national Green Beacon Walking Project is designed to encourage patients to join a walking group, getting them out of the ward with some light physical exercise and helping them make the most of every moment.

Julie commented: "We were approached to get the pilot started at KMPT and joined seven other mental health trusts involved at

a summit in April, led by Dr Jacob Krzanowski, Project coordinator based at the Centre for Sustainable Healthcare. We covered all aspects of the project. Concerns, risk management and, of course, benefits. We also discussed how we can incorporate the walks into other therapies. We shared learning and took away lots of suggestions to start implementing the pilot here at KMPT. It was a great start."

Julie and her colleagues, Eddy Lewis, Senior occupational therapist, and Jessica Temienor, Student occupational therapist, got the ball rolling. Supported by Chief Executive, Helen Greatorex, the team started working with consultants to ensure a process was put in place to maintain the safety of patients and the staff who would be joining them. Assessing each step of the process is important. It's a strict process but then you wouldn't expect anything else. Patient safety is their priority which means some patients are not allowed to join the walking party just yet, but eventually their time will come and they can decide if it's for them.

The concept of the pilot is of course simple. Getting patients out into nature and fresh air will help with their mental and physical health. However, it's not always that easy as some patients are anxious about leaving the ward, or trying something new.

Julie added: "When we started to approach patients to see if they wanted to join us, some were apprehensive, so we started taking photographs of the walks. We noticed more and more wildlife along the way and I wanted to bring some of that back to the ward for those who weren't able to join us, so I started recording bird song. I play it back to the patients

if they are unsure about joining us and for some, it's the little bit of encouragement they need.

"During the walks we often discover some patients have a real love for nature and they have really come out of themselves. It helps them stop thinking about what's worrying them for a while – gives them something new to think about. For some, it helps them to open up to us more as they begin to relax in the quiet countryside. We'll take an opportunity for a short rest and enjoy the scenery around us before we return to the ward. We'll bring back leaves and other interesting objects to give us a reminder of what we've discovered and another talking point between patients.

"We've even had conversations with patients who have enjoyed it so much, they carry on planning walks of their own after they've left. Of course, some patients don't even realise there are potential job opportunities working in nature in this way. To us and our patients, it's so much more than just a walk, it's an opportunity."

All seven trusts involved continue to share pictures and stories of the journeys they are making. Each trust learning from the other, sharing ideas and experiences.

All the information and learning from the project is being collated by the project lead Jacob. He will evaluate and review all the details with a view to creating an easy 'how-to' guide for other mental health trusts. They also hope to be able to carry out some research with the results to be published. All of this work will help raise awareness of the positives of embracing the green spaces surrounding our hospitals and using them to help our patients in a holistic way.

There are many other projects across the trust where staff are encouraging patients to go for walks or improve their physical fitness, so what's so special about this walking project?

Well it could be that it's a national project, bringing national learning from across mental health. It could be that it's helped some very unwell patients who would sometimes be very difficult to deal with. It could be that it's helping patients and staff enjoy their time at Priority House. Staff know they're helping, they're getting exercise as well as looking after patients and can see the difference it is already making.

For me, as editor, it's the cup of tea or hot chocolate at the end of every walk. The conversation that ensues as each person remembers something different from their adventure. It's the passion the staff have for seeing the difference being made and it's seeing the enthusiasm from patients as Julie walks the halls of the ward, reminding them it's that time of the week again. It's time for more adventures.

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“To us and our patients, it's so much more than just a walk, it's an opportunity.”





RETURN TO CLOISTERS 2 OYSTERS

As the sun awoke and steadily climbed higher and higher against the beautiful backdrop of an azure blue sky, a constant stream of relaxed, smiling people, complete with bicycles, could be seen snaking their way along the cobbled streets towards the charming Whitstable harbour and beyond the historic walls of the city of Canterbury.

Against the soundscape of calling seagulls and church bells, participants of this year's annual sponsored bike ride, Cloisters 2 Oysters (C2O), gathered; poised for a day of camaraderie, laughter, and good company.

C2O was the original idea of carer Paul Marsh, who enlisted the help of the Canterbury and Coastal Rethink Carers' Support Group as a way to raise funds for the charity Rethink Mental Illness. Three years later, the group has just celebrated with over 100 people taking part in the 2019 event.

Twelve months earlier, KMPT pledged its support after Chief Executive, Helen Greator, and Director of Workforce and Communications, Sandra Goatley, took part in the event and vowed to return, bringing with them more KMPT recruits – a promise they certainly upheld.

More than 60 people from the trust walked, cycled, ran and helped marshal along the 16 mile scenic Crab and Winkle Way route, which runs between Whitstable and Canterbury.

Cheryl Ives, co-organiser of C2O, said: "The event has grown each year and we are delighted to have had the support of KMPT for a second year. It's a smashing event, with people choosing to start either from Canterbury at the Dolphin pub

or from the picturesque harbour in Whitstable.

"New for this year was the addition of walkers and runners and there were even some dogs who added their own very special sparkle to the event – much to the joy and amusement of others, which was so lovely to see!

"My husband, Chris, and I have a personal connection with KMPT, which began some years ago through our daughter. We play a really active role in the carers' groups and committees and use our lived experience to help people who need support or advice.

"When our daughter was first diagnosed over 30 years ago, there definitely wasn't the level of support and understanding about mental ill health there is now. Carers can often feel left outside of a medical conversation and with little or no idea how to access any other services – let alone think about support for themselves.

"I am pleased to say this is changing slowly, with extra money being used for mental health services and charity organisations like Rethink, but there is some way to go before we can say we have a perfect system.

"It can be a really isolating and frightening experience for carers. The feeling of helplessness and lack of control and understanding can have an immense impact on their own personal wellbeing and mental health.

"Part of the reason why we organise the C2O event, as well as running the Canterbury support group, is to encourage people to think about their life outside of supporting their loved one.

"People need time away – even if it is just for one day. Yes the event raises money and awareness for the charity Rethink Mental Illness, which is vital but, far more important to us, is that this one day provides people with an opportunity to come together, exercise, smile and talk while sharing in a wonderful day out in the stunning outdoors.

"To see the sheer joy across the faces of so many people this year was reward enough and tells me this is a very special event and worth every second of all the hard work it takes to organise it!"

The KMPT team contributed to an overall total of £5,717.70 – so far!

Looking to next year, the trust has already committed to taking part again.

They said: "Thank you to everyone who helped to make this year's event so incredible, from the people behind the scenes making sure it runs smoothly, our brilliant marshals on the day and, of course, everyone who took part.

"We are already starting to plan for next year and have set the date for Sunday 10 May 2020.

"We hope to make it even bigger and better, seeing familiar faces as well as meeting new friends."

So, whether you would like to cycle, walk or run the route, why not join us with your family and friends, take some time for you and enjoy the day. Contact us to join the #KMPTProud team at kmpt.communications@nhs.net

We look forward to seeing you.

NOT DISABLED BUT DIFFERENTLY ABLED

How do you mark the 10th anniversary of a devastating road crash that changed your life forever?

Ten punishing mile-and-a-half hill reps on a push bike in Richmond Park, one for every year – that's the Dan Richards way.

The 33-year-old former soldier came back from a tour in Afghanistan in one piece – but he was far from that after colliding with a central reservation on the A41 in London one Sunday in May 2009. He and his motorcycle parted company and subsequently so did his right shoulder and arm from the rest of his body.

He has remained friends with the helicopter paramedic who said simply, having seen anatomical areas of Dan he should not have been able to see at the roadside, he has never dealt with an injury as substantial as that and then witness someone go on to make a full neurological recovery.

Doctors spent six and half hours trying to reattach the limb before breaking the news to him that it had proved impossible.

He said: "I looked down at where my arm should have been and there was a pillow. I accepted what had happened to me from the off. Whether that was my military training or what, I don't know. I thought, there are people worse off than me."

As an eight-year-old, he watched his father enjoy the camaraderie of army life and wanted to emulate him. He had a plan.

He joined the King's Troop and would train as a farrier (someone who shoes horses), a career he

wanted take into his future once his service was completed.

He returned to work six months after the crash and learned to ride a horse again. He retrained from being right to left-handed and the only thing he couldn't do was clap – or blacksmithery. Three years later, he was medically discharged from the army.

Close to 330 job applications resulted in rejection, he had 15p to his name and as he looked in the mirror, he didn't recognise the reflection.

He said: "I was depressed, reclusive, overweight and thought – what did I really have to look forward to. After taking a punch in the face from life, I had got back up and carried on. If this was then what I had in store, I didn't want to be a part of it.

"My identity, my purpose, was founded in the army and that was taken away. It was not the accident but leaving the army because of it and not being able to get a foothold in anything else; that was my second crash and it was more devastating than the first. The bravest thing anyone can do is ask for help."

Seven years later and Dan has now forged a new career path he could never have imagined.

He was scouted by a modelling agency focussed on redefining the concept of beauty. This led to a casting for Channel 4's Naked Beach television experiment, where he served as a body confidence and wellbeing mentor, and is now a recognised and inspiring social media influencer on the subject.

He was kind enough to join KMPT's Disablement services centre team for mental health awareness week



in May to share experiences with service users – and help in the tea bar.

He said: "It ticks every box for me. I discovered this platform that I was passionate about and good at and I can help people as a result. People feel they can reach out to me on social media.

"A quarter of my body has gone, but I own this body and who I am now. I am no less of a man. I want to normalise disability."

And he has found cycling. Fuelled by his favourite bananas and crunchy peanut butter, he took to YouTube and Google to learn about nutrition and training. His first foray was a 60-mile pedal around London swiftly followed by 350 miles across northern France. He then competed with Team GB at the Invictus Games in Sydney last year. He now works as a performance cycling instructor – and also rows, rock climbs, skis and scuba dives.

"I can't remember who Dan Richards was before the accident, but losing my arm and shoulder was unequivocally and fundamentally the best thing to happen to me. It has shaped me into the man I have become."



Emily Stevens



THE FIGHT BACK TO WELLNESS

Hands up who knows what a moonsault is?

This is the holy grail for Emily Stevens, who is planning on making it her signature move.

The 25-year-old from Tonbridge has been training as a wrestler for two years and to say the sport has grabbed a hold of her is an understatement.

Diminutive she may be, but daring with it. Anyone prepared to do a backwards somersault off the top of the ropes to flatten an opponent deserves some respect. Google 'moonsault' and see.

Emily's friend Ruby Wren will find out via this article that she has borrowed the moniker for her alter ego. She wanted a bad guy character with some attitude who will playfully provoke the crowd. She has to try hard to perfect her sneer however as she is so affable.

She was a second year psychology student in Hertfordshire when she felt the paralysing combination of depression and anxiety descend. She sought support from her GP and would go on to receive a personality disorder diagnosis. She withdrew and cried relentlessly down the phone to her mum.

Always an academic, she struggled on with her studies and graduated in 2016, but not with the flourish she should have done and certainly not with the enjoyment she deserved in achieving it. Her dream of being a psychologist was slipping away from her.

The effects of a toxic relationship, a friendship breakdown, study pressures and coping mechanisms stemming from childhood came together in a familiar story that culminated in mental ill health. And that is how Emily refers to it, an illness she lives with, but with support and resilience one that has not taken her down. She is receiving the treatment she needs.

When she couldn't sleep, she would watch WWE (World Wrestling Entertainment) and it never left her. She searched online for a club and turned up in Swanley to be welcomed into the friendliest of communities.

She now splits training stints between Bethnal Green and Gravesend, where sessions involve perfecting holds and moves, developing character, strength work and lots and lots of cardio.

Emily said: "You have got to be fit. It is very physical and more taxing than people believe. You'd think being on the ropes would be fine, but it is tiring.

"It is also very empowering and has really boosted my confidence, where I have had issues before. I have always been small and have felt that, but I can use it to my advantage in wrestling. People will assume I won't be able to compete and then I surprise them!

"It is a really good community and I've made lots of friends. It has given me a focus and when I am not training, I will be watching or helping at a show. Most

importantly, it's fun. We do take it seriously, but enjoyment is the number one goal.

"To be the person you want to be in the ring is really powerful and inspiring for the other areas of your life. I want to feel like that all of the time."

She is now using her lived experience to help others. She has completed the KMPT's job taster programme at Highlands House in Tunbridge Wells with the Early intervention in psychosis (EIP) team and is currently working with the 111 rehabilitation unit in Maidstone, supporting service users.

She hasn't forgotten her psychology ambitions, although if the wrestling career takes off, that might have to be delayed.

And for the naysayers who dismiss wrestling as a pantomime, Emily says there is a theatrical element and there is an agreed outcome to bouts, but the combat is real. And seriously, who is going to argue with her?

Our great thanks to the friendly and accommodating team at the Underground Gym in Tunbridge Wells for the use of their boxing ring as a photography location.

HEALING PAWS

'Dogs are not our whole life, but they make our lives whole.'

For some, this sentimental quote (Roger A. Caras) goes some way in encapsulating the inexplicably – close bond between people and dogs – our lives are quite simply richer with our canine companions by our side.

Many research studies have been conducted seeking to explain why and how people and dogs have managed to evolve and harmoniously co-exist so successfully. While we have made huge strides forward in the understanding of a dog's mind, the immense impact they have on our mental health and wellbeing is only truly being acknowledged and harnessed within clinical settings in more recent years.

The role of the 'working dog' is now widely accepted within society, utilising the unique skills and qualities of these loyal, sensitive and intelligent animals to empower and liberate people who have often complex disabilities or medical needs.

From police dogs to guide and hearing dogs, we depend upon them to play a pivotal role within our homes and lives and now, with the emergence of Pets as Therapy (PAT) dogs, within our hospitals.

KMPT has been embracing the use of these special furry friends to help service users for many years and is making a concerted effort to utilise them trust-wide with fantastic results so far.

One person who has been championing the use of PAT dogs for service users and now staff at the trust is trainee psychologist, Sarah Bailey, who owns Betsy - a stunning three-year-old Golden Retriever who is an almost permanent member of the team at the Trevor Gibbens Unit (TGU) in Maidstone.

Sarah and Betsy's journey together began when she was a trainee guide dog – big, blonde, bouncy and completely beautiful!

Smiling at the memory, Sarah said: "As much I love her, it was quite clear that Betsy's future was not really as a guide dog - she wasn't quite 'making it' as they say! She really hated public transport - buses in particular - so that wasn't ideal at all!

"I had always thought that organisations really should be using dogs more and questioned why we weren't doing this when the benefits were clear as far as I could see.

"Of course it's great that we use guide dogs and assistance dogs, but I really think dogs can play a bigger part in a more therapeutic capacity. I suppose the more time I spent with Betsy, the more I could see that she would be just perfect as a therapy dog. People just seemed to react to her differently and she was so in tune with humans. It's hard, looking back on it, to imagine she could be anything but a PAT dog!

"She is so loving, accepting and non-judgemental – she includes everyone and is more motivated by a stroke and a kind word than any offer of food as a reward."

Continued page 17...





Sarah Bailey and Betsy



As the TGU's only residential dog, the relationship Betsy has formed with not only service users but staff is incredibly strong and powerful. It's this unique ability to help staff with the stresses of their day that is being explored and the trust, with the help of Betsy, is looking at other ways she can help to improve staff wellbeing while at work.

Sarah explains: "The idea for staff to be able to benefit from time with Betsy really came about as a result of the work she was already doing. Betsy would come onto the ward or go out on supervised walks and for that time, just become that person's dog – something to love and care for – helping to provide moments of normality in a situation that is often difficult and unnatural.

"Staff would often approach me and say, I know Betsy is here to help our patients but could I just take her out for a walk please?

"For me, it seemed like a really easy way to help staff to get out; change their environment for a short period of time and enable them to alter their frame of mind after a challenging event – a way to decompress and have time to themselves if you like. Staff members have also commented on it being a great opportunity to take a walk and have some exercise."

Although this secondary role to Betsy's everyday duties is evolving, staff have already commented on its success and what they feel are improvements to their work environment, therapeutic relationships and a willingness to talk because of a shared experience through Betsy.

Sarah says: "You'll often find that people are more open with one

another when Betsy is in the room. The whole dynamic of the room can change when she bounds in. People are immediately more relaxed and playful. That feeling of calm helps staff and service users to connect positively and improves the wellbeing of everyone. I don't think of Betsy's roles for service users and staff as being separate; they are linked and really do complement one another."

Sarah elaborates: "The relationship we form with dogs is so simple yet complex. Betsy is really adept at reading people's emotions - she's a really sensitive dog but robust at the same time. I am always amazed by how she can adapt and become whatever that person needs her to be in that moment. Whether that is bounding around outside, providing a little humour or a gentle presence at someone's side – she just gets it and gives something that no human can give, which is invaluable."

As well as scheduled walks with Betsy for staff, there are plans to introduce her presence in team debriefs and one-to-one meetings.

Sarah said: "Often our staff face situations which may impact on them very heavily and they may want or need to have Betsy by their side to help process their feelings.

"Although Betsy has formal appointments, there are times where she has been requested by staff and patients to come over to the ward. In those moments of need, Betsy has been described as providing a safe base, which allows people to carry on with their day more positively."

One of the primary benefits of having a therapy dog is their calming effect in stressful clinical

settings such as hospitals. The presence of a friendly animal can have a powerful reassuring effect. The holistic benefits of animals are not just limited to patients, it can apply to everyone within that environment – making it a far more enjoyable and less frightening place.

At KMPT, we have 17 PAT dogs who are used widely across Kent and Medway and, like Betsy, the support they offer staff and patients is priceless.

Sarah said: "We are all very proud of the PAT dogs we have within the trust and we recently celebrated their role as part of a KMPT PAT dog celebration in June. This was a fabulous chance to focus on the huge contribution they make – plus we even had our own Woofs dog show, complete with our very own Woofs champion of 2019!"

So what now for Betsy?

Sarah laughs: "She is very much in demand! Everyone loves Betsy which is brilliant as I feel we have so much more we can achieve with her to help staff and patients."

And with those chocolate brown expressive eyes, calm nature and willingness to please, we're desperately waiting to reach the front of the queue!

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"I am always amazed by how she can adapt and become whatever that person needs her to be."

THE PATH TO ACCEPTANCE

"I started writing a script because one day I'll write a book. I believe sharing my story will help other people and that's what this is all about."

Adel gets straight to the point as we meet at the Village Hotel for a chat about her forthcoming film 'A Path to Acceptance'. This is also Adel's local gym aka her second home. Her third home is at the YMCA in Loose, where she runs fitness sessions. And her fourth home is within her self-built fitness community, which she has been steadily developing since she arrived in Maidstone in 2016.

Having been raised in a small village in Ireland, community is everything and Adel has carried that with her. She knows the importance of having people around to uplift and celebrate you. She is more than the fitness trainer and Herbalife promoter you first meet; she is the embodiment of the Murphy Motivation spirit, borne in her childhood.

"I grew up in a house which was always full of children. We were a family of eight but there were never less than 10 children in the house as mam was always looking after other people's. It was carnage at the dinner table! We always struggled for money. I remember every Wednesday we had a boiled egg and rice pudding and you had to eat quickly before someone else got to it first! We were a close-knit family, played a lot of sports and we all had each other's backs."

Adel received counselling and taught herself some coping techniques before moving to Kent, but of course, sometimes we need a little more than that.

"I'd gone through some difficult times before leaving Ireland. I knew I wasn't coping but it took my partner at the time to convince me to get help. I was in a bad way. I developed some daily disciplines – training, listening to motivational speakers. The same thing every day for five months. Anytime I had to be in my own head, I put my headphones on and took it all in. My counsellor discharged me, telling me to continue doing what I was doing because 'obviously' it was working. Of course I was hiding my real feelings – as you do.

"Things seemed to move quickly after that. I was on a Herbalife vacation and shared a room with my friend Danni Farmer, who lived in Maidstone at the time. She suggested coming over, join in with the Buggy Bootcamp she ran and consider some networking opportunities. A few weeks later, I woke up and the decision was made. I booked a ticket and found a place to live. Two weeks after that, I was on that plane with my clothes and my bike, leaving everything else I had worked so hard for behind.

"I knew it was the right thing to do. I needed to take some time for me."

It wasn't all plain sailing from there. Adel had her bike to help explore her new community and she trained at a local gym, but struggled to get by day-to-day. Time went on and she continued to build her self-resilience, training both physically and mentally.

"My journey is a garden. You get weeds in your garden right? You can be always pulling the weeds and nothing happens as they continue to grow. I went on medication and that helped me

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"I've been given another chance at life."

to pull the weeds. The counselling helped to pull the roots because I knew I had to get to the roots in order for the weeds to go. To keep the garden clear – that's self-development."

Fast forward to now, Adel is pushing Murphy Motivation as far as possible. She carries out The Zuu fitness training, gives motivational speeches in schools and is looking forward to launching her film.

"It's really powerful and I can't wait for everyone to see it. I really hope it gives the message that hope is there. It isn't just about physical health, we need to build the muscle from within. I've accepted this is who I am, there's nothing wrong with having mental ill health. I have my coping mechanisms and sometimes I need something extra but I can recognise the signs and I reach out for help when I need it.

"I'm always giving myself something to strive for. Competitions, my 7@7 exercise videos (live Facebook and YouTube videos at 7am every morning!), A Path to Acceptance. I don't know where it's going to go but I'll do whatever it takes to get my message out there.

"I've been given another chance at life. I was ready to die, but I'm here for a purpose. I'm here to inspire one, inspire many. I've been given a second chance to make a difference."

www.murphymotivation.co.uk





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It's a group everyone looks forward to.”

ART OF AGE

“Where’s Steven now? Oh there he is, in the adventure playground!”

Trying to keep track of these sexagenarians, septuagenarians, octogenarians and nonagenarians is more challenging than having toddlers at times.

But the team at community charity Dover smART Project minds not one jot. Reward enough are the smiles and giggles from the beneficiaries of a project designed to tackle devastating loneliness in the town.

It all started with a listen a few years back to a radio documentary about social isolation among older people with Sunday afternoon highlighted to be a particular pinch point.

They named their subsequent weekly event of food and friendship ‘Lily’s Lounge’ after a much-loved Pilgrim’s Hospice patient who passed away. They inadvertently bought her crockery after it had been donated to a charity shop and her family generously provided a donation for the set-up cost.

Much merriment and cake munching was had, but numbers dwindled as mortality caught up with the members and then a move to a venue without a kitchen signalled a rethink. That is when the ‘Free Tea For OAPs’ reverse youth club was born.

A marketing campaign in the right places in town struck a chord with those born in a certain era, but certainly not comfortable with the blanket term of pensioner and determined to redefine it.

They balked at the idea of bingo and beetle drives and instead wanted to whizz down the promenade on scooters and paddle in the sea – so they did.

Sausage roll taste tests and graffiti-spraying zimmer frames (Pimp My Zimmer really is a thing) are much more preferable to the standard activities provided for retired folk.

The playground incident came during an outing to one of the primary schools, an intergenerational get-together with storytelling, jelly eating and one last go on the slide.

The group includes a Harley-Davidson owner (Heather), a guitarist (Dave), a marathon runner (Billy) and a window dresser (Roy), who ended up on the doorstep one day after his wife lost him while out shopping and he has never left. His selection of colourful braces is a sight to behold.

Regular visitors from residential and nursing homes with their activity coordinators, many living with dementia, complete the club.

Dawn Maddison is one of the founders of Dover smART Project. She said: “It is one of my favourite moments of the week. To spend time with this group is an absolute privilege.

“They have collectively grown in confidence and it makes them braver to try other things as well as supporting one another to maintain their independence. They have now taken ownership of the group and they quite rightly demand more exciting things.

“They open up to us with their struggles and we have been able to support and signpost to outside agencies including the PCSO, community warden and a counsellor. If they are not with a service, it would be easy for them to go unnoticed with no one looking after them.

“We hear the results of research that loneliness is harmful to physical and mental health with links to cognitive decline, dementia, depression and suicide. We wanted to do something about that. Don’t write off this generation, they have so much to offer. They are as bright and sharp as when they were in their 20s and 30s – if you take the time to listen.”

It gives Dawn goosebumps to think about the respect and kindness they show to people from the diverse mix of cultures who call Dover home, together with volunteers with learning difficulties and those from the homeless community.

She added: “These are wonderful, genuine friendships with no barriers. We laugh and cry with them. It is a group that everyone looks forward to.

“Bringing happiness to people as part of my working life with smART has a huge positive impact on my own personal health and wellbeing. The joy we all get from being together is tangible and not a Tuesday goes by when, as we wave them goodbye, we don’t begin counting down to the next week.”

The sessions also include creating works of art and supporting the charity’s other work, such as its period poverty campaign. The club packs up baskets of sanitary products for free distribution to girls and women in need.

It is an inspirational model now being looked at by Age UK in east Kent. The team has also run sessions at Coleman House in Dover, which has an established community-active group for older service users.

Learn more about the charity here: www.doversmartproject.co.uk

FINGER ON THE PULSE OF SPORTS VOLUNTEERING

The spirit of 2012 is still burning brightly in Clare Hatfull.

The Liaison psychiatry nurse at the William Harvey Hospital in Ashford filled out an application form to be involved in the London Olympics and Paralympics to have something to look forward to while recovering from knee replacement surgery. Much to her surprise and delight, she was selected as a first aid volunteer for the cycling team.

Now Sir Bradley Wiggins, Laura Kenny and Mark Cavendish will always wave hello.

Thankfully, most athletes stay in the saddle and it is only the odd cut and graze that requires some attention, but coming off in the velodrome has other complications.

Clare said: "You can get splinters where you really don't want splinters."

Having spent many shifts in the Paralympic basketball arena where wheelchair rugby was played, this immediately became a passion for Clare.

She met GB captain (and now BBC commentator and presenter) Steve Brown and was involved from the beginning as he set about creating Canterbury Hellfire Wheelchair Rugby Club, a sport somewhat disconcertingly also called 'murderball'.

She said: "It can be pretty brutal! When you first see the crashes, you take a sharp intake of breath, but you are soon cheering for them.

"I am a team liaison officer at international events. I have just returned from Poland where I was with the Swedish team. I truly love being a part of the extended wheelchair rugby family. It is such a welcoming community and I have met friends for life."

Cycling would have always been her discipline, but a childhood diagnosis of rheumatoid arthritis put pay to her dreams of competing. Volunteering has enabled her to play an active role in a variety of sports, travel the world and be in the crowd at umpteen competitions she would otherwise never have experienced.

Clare retired four years ago and came back on a part-time contract with KMPT, which offers a degree of flexibility around her other activities as well as funding her flights and accommodation.

She is now also part of the GB cycling team's anti-doping unit.

Clare said: "You get right up close to the action and see on a different level just what a machine it is. Chatting to the mechanics about the millimetre changes to carve out an advantage on the track. Doctors monitoring every heartbeat. Such detailed research and analysis. And tapping techniques used by many of the riders now to gain focus."

Clare celebrates a milestone birthday in 2020 and is going to combine all her hobbies in one hit – first aid, wheelchair rugby and filling up her passport with exciting stamps with a challenge to visit 60 cities in her 60th year. She hopes the

Olympics in Japan will take care of a few of those, as she eagerly awaits some good news that she has once again been selected as an Olympic and Paralympic volunteer. She will be fundraising for Pilgrims Hospice and her wheelchair rugby team as she goes.

Looking at an incredible collection of event T-shirts that need a wardrobe of their own and treasured photo albums full of selfies with the stars long before the Instagram generation, Clare encourages everyone to volunteer.

She said: "I love working in sport. It is part of my life now and I will do it for as long as I can. You have a reputation on the circuit, which is why the event organisers come back to you to be part of the team.

"It all inspires me and gives me the confidence to get up and go when it is hard to get out of bed some days. I have had some magical experiences."

The wheelchair rugby team is currently looking for a volunteer physio and new players are always welcome. Team building days are also available with the club in return for a donation.

For more information, email Clare on c.hatfull@nhs.net. See more about the club here: <https://cantrugby.co.uk/wheelchair-rugby/>



Judith Whybrow



ANGELS DELIGHT AT THEIR ROLE

Great healing power lies in a hair brush when it is in the right hands.

And those hands belong to Judith Whybrow and her band of Judith's Angels.

Patients in Fern and Foxglove wards at St Martins in Canterbury look forward to Wednesday afternoons when the volunteer team arrives, resplendent in their distinctive turquoise tunics, with a bag of tricks for some transformational treatments.

Unable to enjoy the benefits of a spa day experience for themselves at this current moment in their lives – or possibly never having even considered being deserving of this as an option – the spa day instead comes to them. People love it.

Judith said: "This is for both men and women. Some may have been reluctant at first, but now they are waiting for us to turn up and this is part of their weekly routine.

"It brings a calmness to the ward and patients tell us they feel so much more relaxed afterwards. Sometimes I have people falling asleep and I wholeheartedly take that as a positive!"

The Angels brush and comb hair and complete hand and arm pampering to soothe and reinvigorate. They do facial cleansing, manicures and make up sessions.

Judith added: "This is also about self-esteem and if we make

someone up, to see their smile in the mirror is wonderful. It is instilling that self-belief as when you believe in yourself, you can achieve anything.

"When we listen, people sometimes start singing and we join in. On one occasion, someone once went and got their musical instrument and started playing. They were happy. That has stayed with me."

The grandmother found she had some time on those hands after being made redundant from her role as a tutor for excluded children. She approached KMPT's Voluntary services team about opportunities at the Canterbury hospital nearly six years ago and was first introduced to patients in a role as a befriender, where her exceptional listening skills and warmth made her a great confidante.

She said: "At that point I didn't think I was offering much, but I now know it was more than I realised.

"If I can head home with the knowledge I have made a difference, then it has been a good day."

This work is the honouring of a 40-year-old ambition held by Judith who, as a teenager, told her mother she wanted to work in an asylum and help people. Deterred from this she was guided into a 'proper' job as a secretary, then library assistant and eventually teacher.

But the burning desire to care never left her.

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"I didn't think I was offering much, but I now know it was more than I realised."

Judith spends all day, every Wednesday at St Martins. The mornings are filled with art activities including card making, stencilling and bracelet design, where participants are encouraged to freely express themselves. And that they do.

The Angels have evolved, championed unwaveringly by Voluntary services and supported with generous donations for training and materials by the Friends For Mental Health (east Kent) team. A project that was only supposed to last for three months is still going strong.

Now Judith is appealing for more Angels to join the throng, so the effect can expand to more wards. Her vision is to roll it out across the trust and perhaps beyond. The role requirements are simple: kindness, compassion and a good listening ear. Any necessary training will be provided.

For more information about getting involved, please email kmpt.voluntaryservices@nhs.net

THE MANY FACES OF MENOPAUSE

"I'm going to get one of those lacy flamenco fans as a handheld battery one might get caught in my hair and then I will have even more problems!"

Bringing a whole new meaning to the term hot desking is KMPT's Diversity and inclusion facilitator Yasmin Ralph, who is now approaching the menopause with some humour. It's not all giggles, however. Initially she felt like crying when she realised she was heading into the 'next phase of womanhood' (her mum's phrase), largely because she had no idea what to expect.

The 48-year-old wanted to speak to Connected to start a conversation – importantly involving both men and women, encouraging support and understanding.

It is not just the well-documented hot flushes, it is the irrational daily rages and forgetfulness, which infuriatingly seemed to coincide with important meetings, that have left her feeling confused, isolated and at times scared.

Yasmin said: "I was completely out of control with the mood swings. I am a professional person, but I was not feeling professional. I felt like a fraud. I was going blank, losing words and fanning myself with bits of paper, convinced people were looking at me and thinking – what on earth is wrong with her?"

"I was exhausted from interrupted sleep. I felt a complete mess. I started to doubt my abilities and it didn't feel like me."

Part of the problem she feels, is making the menopause age-related. The average is between 49 and 55, but symptoms can begin slowly, earlier. And younger women can be

facing it instantaneously through medical reasons.

The physical and emotional signs were there and colleagues planted the seed, but Yasmin thought she was too young for it.

Breaking point came at a car wash when she wanted to unleash her irrational anger on a woman, who innocently stood in front of her. Her husband, who had been valiantly experiencing her short fuse for a while, gently suggested a trip to the GP.

She said: "It was like an out-of-body experience. I didn't want to be like that but I couldn't stop it. My brain was saying attack, attack, attack. I thought she was deliberately antagonising me.

"Stephen has been brilliant and not just for getting me to see my GP!"

Yasmin, had a celebration cake baked for her and a party gathering when she started her period. It was a female celebration, according to her family matriarchs, but menopause was not spoken about.

She said: "Everyone knows puberty is a tumultuous time. Well, so is this. I was in no way mentally prepared for it.

"Society may be slowly redefining what it is to be an older woman, but it is still behind the curve with this. The current connotations of menopause do not help and nor does the fact it remains a taboo subject."

Yasmin had already diagnosed herself with Dr Google but her real doctor was very supportive once menopause was confirmed and talked over the options, the risks and the realities. She plumped for a low dose of HRT and she will have

three-monthly check-ups from here on in. So far, so good.

There are some positives; she can wear her summer wardrobe all year round. She walked up Canterbury high street in a vest top in the January snow.

She said: "It is hard to explain. It is like there is a rising fire coming from the inside out. I have some transgender friends who say I am lucky to be going through the menopause. They would be most welcome to it!

"Women and men need to be open talking about it, and we must elevate one another. I have bonded with people I might not have done otherwise and that has certainly helped."

The trust will be marking World Menopause Day on 18 October and is looking to set up an awareness network in advance, a safe environment to share experiences and practical help and advice and an opportunity to shape what support KMPT could be offering its staff experiencing the menopause.

If you would like to be involved, please email the communications team on kmpt.communications@nhs.net. Men and women very welcome.

Yasmin is also a regular visitor to Facebook page [The Chilled Menopause](#).





CONNECTING WITH TECHNOLOGY

Whether you are sceptical about the advantages of technology or a geek who eagerly anticipates the release of the latest must-have gadget, one thing is for sure; good innovation presents its own distinct set of challenges in healthcare as well as the opportunity and freedom to use it to bring about quality improvement and efficiencies for people too.

It is precisely this desire to embrace technology for positive change that has seen the trust invest in upgrading an integral part of its digital infrastructure. Over the summer, the IT department and colleagues from across the trust have been working hard to install a high-specification video conferencing system in 36 rooms across the trust's estates, complete with a clever software package called Life Size.

The introduction of this new equipment means all staff will be able to video call colleagues within the trust, service users, carers and external fellow healthcare professionals using a variety of devices including laptops, smart phones and other devices with a camera and a microphone.

It is this ability to be able to converse with other people across a wide geographic area that has led to the emergence of a new e-consultation pilot scheme, which Dr Melanie George, consultant clinical neurologist, is very excited to be trialling soon.

The new e-consultation approach to service delivery will enable the neurological department to dramatically reduce waiting times and improve patient care and wellbeing by bringing the service to people without the need for them to

travel. This will connect service users, carers and the neurological team, even when they are in completely different locations.

Melanie said: "The whole team really believes this approach is the way forward in helping us counteract some of the challenges we face around growing workloads while helping to improve the service as well."

A small group of KMPT staff recently visited Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Trust (BSMHT) where they learned they had installed a similar e-consultation system and have seen an outstanding improvement in not only the delivery of their service, but a significant reduction in waiting times too.

The feedback from patients and staff from BSMHT has been extremely positive, with many listing the freedom to choose how their appointments can be conducted to suit their needs being the primary driver in opting to receive care in this way.

A point Melanie absolutely agrees with wholeheartedly: "The way in which we work flexibly to accommodate a person's particular needs and unique circumstances plays a huge part in their general wellbeing and long-term recovery.

"The people we see are often experiencing significant mobility issues and are in immense pain, meaning they are not able to cope with long journeys or the inevitable waits that are associated with using hospital transport.

"Others may have anxiety or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder as a secondary issue to a traumatic brain injury and, as a consequence, may

not be ready to face using public transport just yet.

"The use of e-consultations will mean this is no longer a barrier because we can conduct a full consultation using video conferencing technology.

"At the moment, an initial assessment may be done over the phone.

"Seeing someone face-to-face helps to establish trust on both sides. Importantly, it also helps to build up a much richer picture about the person because we can assess mental wellbeing, not just through tone of voice but also through appearance, demeanour, body language and movement."

The neurology department also supports people who have marked cognitive difficulties affecting their attention and memory. These impairments can make the simplest of tasks seem more frightening and often impacts on the person's independence as they are reliant on others to accompany them to their appointments – something which could be overcome should this pilot prove to be successful.

Another key benefit for staff and patients is the ability to be able to conduct far more consultations over the course of the day.

Melanie explains: "The area we cover across Kent is vast; this often means clinicians spend a lot of time in their car travelling to and from home-based appointments.

"Introducing e-consultations will help us to utilise our time more efficiently and give us the flexibility to see more people who really need us."

THE ART OF MINDFULNESS

In today's modern society, most people would probably describe their lives as busy; constantly rushing to and from work, picking up children, balancing social lives, relationships and the practicalities of the everyday.

This gruelling, fast-paced existence, combined with the often crippling pressure on people to be seen to do and achieve more, could arguably be identified as contributing factors in an increasing number of people admitting to feeling more stressed, less satisfied, depressed and emotionally fatigued.

The phrase 'keeping up with the Joneses' has assumed a whole new meaning; reaching fever pitch with the dominance of social media and an insatiable culture to create, share, tweet and Instagram every selfie, thought, feeling or meal!

So what can help people navigate the vicissitudes of life and offer a way to bring about more balance and harmony of emotions in their life and relationships? One practice that has become popular for reducing stress levels in recent years is the art of mindfulness.

Dr Vaughan R. McGill, Consultant clinical psychologist, has been a dedicated practitioner of mindfulness for in excess of 20 years and believes its regular practice can help re-establish the mind and body's natural rhythms that are interrupted by the undulations and demands of modern life.

Vaughan said: "When people think of mindfulness, they think it is adopting a trance-like state – quite the opposite. Mindfulness is not switching off or even zoning out, it is a deliberate act that requires

people to be in control and focus their mind in the present, so it remains calm and focused, yet alert.

"The first step to practicing mindfulness is learning to concentrate. Traditionally, people can practice to do this in a variety of ways, for example by focusing on their breath or an object like a stone, candle etc. People can also use movement – the way you walk – or an everyday act like the drinking of a cup of coffee. The key is that you remain deliberately aware and controlled – see the steam rising from the coffee, smell the aroma, feel the heat and just appreciate the drink using all of your senses."

Mindfulness is a special kind of awareness and intention that helps us live more firmly in the present. It helps us engage life more fully and understand ourselves better.

Many cultures have used the art to help people shift the mind including Indian, Chinese, Tibetan and Zen cultures - each choosing to focus on various elements of the practice in line with their own cultural beliefs.

Mindfulness practice commonly falls into three main categories: concentration, choice-less awareness and compassion practices. Through each of these practices, people will acquire and hone various skills of focus; from concentrating on breath, objects or visualisation through to developing insight and clarity into the natural patterns of their mind as well as improving upon empathy, caring, social connection and self-acceptance.

Vaughan added: "An easy way to grasp the concept of mindfulness practice is to think of it like gardening. You observe the garden. You also tidy it and tend to it by

pulling weeds and then you plant your garden with beautiful flowers.

"Through the practice of mindfulness, we do exactly the same by using the power of focus, thought and connection to regulate our emotions."

There is scientific proof that the regular practice of mindfulness alters the brain structure – making it more receptive to learning, more able to regulate emotions and increasing a person's resilience.

Other benefits from regular practice include an increase in calmness and alertness, life satisfaction and confidence and control as well as an improvement in empathy, compassion, focus, memory and attention.

"People who practice mindfulness appreciate life more, feel calmer and have better relationships with others."

So how do you start practicing mindfulness?

Vaughan's advice is to start simple and build upon the practice: "People are often overly ambitious in terms of length of time to practice in the beginning. Start small, practice for five minutes first then slowly increase the time by 30 seconds.

"And if you get stuck, don't worry about it, there are so many good apps like Headspace and videos on YouTube that can help to get you started.

"In mindfulness, there are no wrong or right ways to practice, all that matters is that you give it a go, practice regularly and hopefully very soon, you'll be reaping the rewards!"



We're #KMPTProud to be part of Pride 2019



In the next issue...

Take a look at the glorious pictures of Canterbury and Margate Pride. Learn how others are raising awareness of diversity, read about how we are challenging stigma and hear from the fabulous London Gay Men's Chorus. It's an issue not to be missed!

