



Kent and Medway
NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust



Your news bulletin from KMPT Voluntary services

Welcome to Volunteer Voices...

It's been a very cold and snowy start to February - we hope you've all been keeping warm and cosy, and of course found some time to build a snowman or two!

With the coronavirus pandemic continuing to cause many of our services to stay closed, we are encouraging any volunteer who has been unable to help us in their usual way to come forward and be provided with a temporary, new role. Roles such as IT buddies and telephone befrienders (you can read more about them both below) are vital at this time, to help our most vulnerable members of the community stay connected. If you're interested in taking on a few hours a week to help us at this time,

please get in touch with a member of the team.

This week we have been celebrating our wonderful student volunteers. KMPT has lots of opportunities available to students which can help support their learning or be a means of escapism from their studying. Laura, Megan and Jess all share their stories below and have all taken on very different volunteering roles within the Trust.

Volunteering at KMPT is not just about the work we do, but the community we have formed. Therefore, we love hearing about your lockdown pursuits and interests as they motivate us all to try something new! If you would like to contribute a story, recipe, poem or photograph (the possibilities are endless) to the newsletter, then please get in touch with our [Communications team](#).

Thank you for your endless support and the amazing work that you're still doing to help us.

Stay safe out there.

Student Volunteering Week

The 8 to 14 February is Student Volunteering Week. To celebrate here at KMPT we have been catching up with some of our wonderful student volunteers to find out how they support the Trust.

Laura Smith

Meet Laura, she started volunteering when she was a student at the University of Kent and has continued to volunteer remotely while completing her Masters at Kings College London.

"I heard about the amazing work that a friend was doing as a KMPT volunteer and so decided to volunteer as well. I mainly volunteer as a technology buddy for older adults. As a technology buddy, I have been able to assist older adults to use technology which has allowed them to communicate with friends and family virtually. I have also become a telephone befriender, which is a friendly person at the end of the phone to have a chat to during these difficult times. These roles from all volunteers have helped to reduce feelings of loneliness. I find volunteering very rewarding, and I am always supported by other professionals within the Trust. I would recommend becoming a KMPT volunteer to anyone!"



Megan Payne

Meet Megan, who is a psychology student at the University of Kent and is about to become a Life story volunteer.

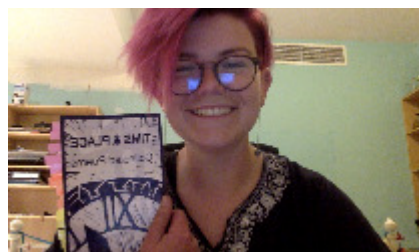
"As a psychology student who hopes to train to become a Clinical psychologist in the future, I wanted to find an opportunity to work with mental health service users and gain an understanding of the challenges they face, as well as the ways health professionals work to support patients. Due to the constraints of the pandemic I unfortunately haven't had the opportunity to work on the ward yet. However, what I am most looking forward to is learning about the lives of service users, and how their past has influenced the person they are today. The Voluntary services team at KMPT has been extremely supportive and informative, so even if you aren't quite sure or feel a little unconfident putting yourself forward, just have a chat with them about yourself and the role. Don't forget, volunteering is not only beneficial to the people you work with but also for boosting your confidence and making you feel good in knowing you are doing something, no matter how small it is, to help others."



Jess Shaw

Meet Jess, a former student at the University of Kent and now a Masters student at the University of Exeter who has held many volunteering roles with us supporting people living with dementia.

"I met Keith Oliver, one of KMPT's Dementia envoys, while working on another volunteering project and he recommended I volunteer for KMPT. I became an 'adult befriender' - which is a title I absolutely love. Essentially I assisted with the Forget-Me-Nots' meetings, and helped with the library project. During the first lockdown I also called members of the Forget-Me-Nots to check up on them, and helped people get online for their meetings. Through this I also helped a member by scribing a book chapter and accompanied them to London to give a workshop to the Alzheimer's Society on working with people with dementia. I have loved volunteering for KMPT as I gained confidence, befriended lovely fellow volunteers and worked with some great people. It's also really what you make of it, so don't be afraid to suggest ideas."



Chris Cook becomes a volunteer vaccinator

Our Friends of Mental Health (west Kent) treasurer, Chris Cook, has become a volunteer COVID-19 vaccinator.

You've probably all seen Chris about every now and then – stocking the vending machines in Priority House, selling Christmas cards and all sorts of other things, but did you know that he used to be a KMPT employee?

Chris explained: "I worked for 41 years in the health service initially as a registered general and medical nurse. I worked for the NHS from 1983 as a Senior nurse and then with KMPT as a Human resources manager.

"After retirement I maintained connection with the NHS and became a member of the Friends of Mental Health (west Kent) as treasurer. I am also chairman on the Maidstone branch of the NHS Retirement Fellowship.

"My daughter works for Kent Community NHS Foundation Trust and she suggested I become a vaccinator - which I thought sounded like a great idea as I've really been feeling the need to do something useful. There was 16 hours of training online, and then I had a basic face-to-face session on life support skills and injection technique.

"I have completed a few shifts at Woodville Halls, Gravesend, dealing mainly with older people – many of whom would not have been out of their houses for many months and are relieved to be attending the session for their vaccination. I had one younger person who was clinically vulnerable and so grateful for the vaccination and she said that it had given her a new lease of life.

"I have been very impressed with how the local NHS have taken on this enormous task and the incredible task of taking on the logistics of this process."

Thank you Chris for your ongoing support and for taking the time to help with such a vital job.



Join our book club!

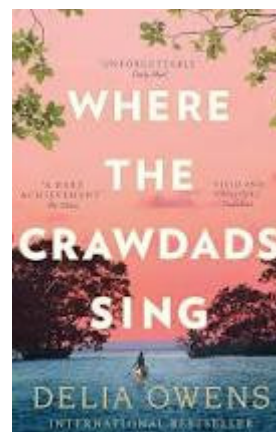
Voluntary services has started a book club and you're all invited!

The first book club meeting was held on Friday 29 January and was kickstarted with everyone reading 'Where The Crawdads Sing' by Delia Owens.

Here's some feedback about the first session from some of your fellow volunteers...

"I love reading and listening to books so it's a great group as we all have that in common and we can share our favourite books without feeling we are doing an A Level in Literature. I have started the first book recommended" – Eleanor Bole

"I loved the book club. It was great to connect with other readers and I have been enjoying the title we have agreed to read together. In fact, I have been switching off my lights to go to sleep at about 4am, because I can't put it down. I have never attended a book club before and I



am looking forward to the next session to discuss our book” – Claire Garrard

“Joining the book Club is a good opportunity to share opinions, ideas, feelings with others. It is a great idea, especially as the chosen book is a well-known bestseller. We can learn that everybody can have different point of view, and that is still all right” – Edyta Kolomanska

“I love being exposed to books I wouldn’t normally read so that’s a huge plus for me” – Erica Martin

If you're interested in joining then please email, louise.blackwood@nhs.net.

The next meeting will be on Friday 26 February - we hope to see you there!

The joys of becoming an IT buddy!

Jane Roscow, one of our incredible IT buddies, has told us all about why volunteering has given her so much joy...and unleashed some hidden talents!

Jane says: "During the mad fog of COVID-19, I volunteered as an IT buddy to keep me busy. I could never have imagined in my wildest dreams the pleasure it's given me to meet and work with the funny, down to earth, talented poet who was my buddy. He's gone from zero: not using Lifesize, Word, or email to being an IT hero – now regularly logging onto his own computer, checking his emails everyday, typing his own poems and chatting to me weekly using Lifesize.

"During our regular reminiscing I mentioned that I'd lived in Germany during the Cold War, and that the Berlin Wall had cast its long dark shadow over 12 years of my life. Next thing I know, the poem 'Fall of the Wall' arrived in my inbox – to say I was emotional is to understate by an order of magnitude. Read and judge for yourself the power of these words."

Fall of the Wall

9th of November 1989, the day of the fall of the Berlin Wall
This date should remain as a pertinent symbol to all
Having stood nearly thirty years, a symbol of man's oppression
With each family's attempts to unite being met with aggression
Desperate to make the crossing they often paid with their lives
Never again to be united - families, husbands and wives
Following mass protests in 1989, an agreement eventually reached
East met West and the Wall at last was finally breached
Applauded and acclaimed by members of the United Nations
Desperately seeking the start of better relations.

Thank you Jane and to your buddy for sharing your amazing story - we hope to see more history-inspired poetry soon!

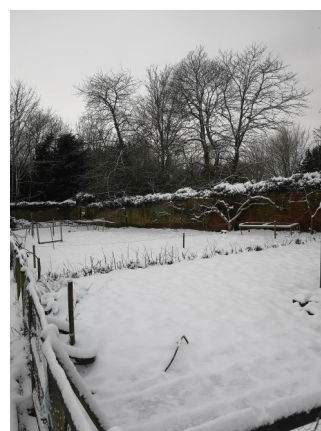
Webb's garden

Due to the current lockdown, a lot of our volunteering opportunities are on hold once again. Luckily, a handful of volunteers are still able to tend to our lovely Webb's garden in Canterbury, going once or twice a week to water the seeds that have recently been planted. These will bear fruit in the spring and summer and be available for anyone who wishes to buy the produce, plants or flowers.

One volunteer was there on Tuesday morning, having driven in the snow, to water the seedlings in the greenhouse just to make sure they are all healthy and strong.

We would like to thank the volunteers for their continued effort and support of the garden and keeping it running during particularly challenging and difficult times.

Zoe Young, Voluntary services co-ordinator east Kent, also decided to visit Webb's earlier this week and took a few photos of the garden in the snow - since we don't have snow very often. I'm sure you can agree that it looks like our very own KMPT winter wonderland!



Become a telephone befriender

Lesley Windless started volunteering for KMPT in the summer of 2019, helping out with an Occupational therapy led arts and crafts group, held on Monday mornings. Lesley's son has autism and learning difficulties and so she fully appreciates the challenges faced by those with additional needs or mental health illnesses, and wished to use her personal experiences to support and help others.

Since the COVID-19 restrictions took effect last year, the art group has not been able to meet so Lesley spoke to our Voluntary services team who recommended she became a telephone befriender. This role involves providing a source of friendly support during these tough times, chatting about someone's hobbies, interests and life in general and looking forward to the time when restrictions ease and normal life can begin to return.

Lesley was matched with a service user who has been left feeling quite isolated as a result of many of his volunteer and social activities being temporarily suspended, and has been enjoying their catch ups over the last few weeks!

Lesley said: "I really enjoy getting to know service users and seeing the difference, however small, regular phone calls or attending a group can make to their lives. During these uncertain times in particular, it does feel good to know you're doing your bit to help and the staff in the Voluntary services team and the other volunteers are all so friendly and supportive."

"I would definitely recommend volunteering for KMPT. Whatever amount of time you have to give is enough and will be appreciated. My role takes about an hour a week, or half a day a week when I'm back helping at the art group. Everyone I've met, both staff and other volunteers have been so friendly and supportive and it's very rewarding to see the difference it makes to people's lives."

Thank you Lesley. If you are interested in becoming a telephone befriender or know someone who might be, then please get in contact with the Voluntary services team today: kmpt.voluntaryservices@nhs.net



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