



Kent and Medway
NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust



Your news bulletin from KMPT Voluntary services

Welcome to Volunteer Voices...

It's officially summer - the evenings are longer and the sun is shining!

June is always a busy month for us in Voluntary services as it's Volunteers Week - the perfect opportunity for us to celebrate our volunteers and to highlight all the amazing work you do. You can read more below about what we've been up to - but spoiler alert it was lovely to be reunited with so many of you last week!

As it is summer and the restrictions in the UK are continuing to ease, it's allowing us to provide more volunteering opportunities outdoors, particularly in our gardens. We're lucky at KMPT to have lots of green spaces available to us, but maintaining these is hard work. If you're green-fingered and fancy a spot of gardening at one of our sites, please do get in contact. You can read more about them later on too.

We have some very exciting news, our lovely volunteer Laura Smith has been nominated for the NHS Volunteer of the Year award, in memory of John Hawkins (our service user who sadly passed away earlier this year) and for all the outstanding work she has contributed during the pandemic. We are so proud of Laura and fingers crossed for the results - but just being nominated is an amazing achievement. Congratulations Laura!

With a sense of jubliance in the air, we hope that the amazing work that we do as a team can just continue to grow. We have so many opportunities available in the service but we're always looking for new, unique and exciting ideas to further exapnd the experiences we can provide and to also give you the chance to share your talents with the wider community.

Please do get in touch with us if you have any ideas or would like to try your hand at another area of volunteering - you can read more about some of our existing opportunities below.

For now, we hope you're all enjoying the glorious weather and continuing to stay safe.

Volunteers Week 2021

1-7 June was Volunteers Week 2021!

To celebrate we held a picnic in Mote Park, Maidstone, for you all to attend.

It was the perfect opportunity, thanks to the lovely weather, to see each other again (for some after over a year) and to share our appreciation of all you do, as without all of your hard work and dedication we wouldn't be able to provide all of the amazing extra services that we can.

It was a lovely afternoon, and we heard so many of you commenting on how nice it was to be outside and catch up with each other.

We were pleased to be able to share out tomato plants as gifts and we would love for you all to send us photos and feedback when the plants are growing!

A huge thank you to everyone who attended and we hope to be able to hold more events like this in the coming months.



Learning more about our volunteering opportunities

As part of Volunteer Week, we have also caught up with some of our volunteers to find out about their experiences.

First, we bring you Chris Noble, Reverend at St Mary's Stansted Church, Sevenoaks, and a voluntary Chaplain at Bridge House.

Every week he runs a group session with patients, talking about their struggles in the past and present - as well as their hopes and aspirations for the future.

Chris says: "I became a voluntary Chaplain for KMPT over two years ago and it has been a good experience to be able to make a positive contribution into the lives of patients who are wanting to get their health back. Disease and its treatment can be tough and a real roller coaster ride in terms of recovery. As a voluntary mental health Chaplain working in a detoxification service, I find myself seeking to bring hope through conversations and weekly discussion groups with clients. As many volunteers will no doubt testify, I get far more out of it than I give. Perhaps the greatest gift we can offer people as they seek recovery is to just be there and listen. We give our time and in a busy world that is a valuable commodity. I am proud to be an NHS volunteer."

Our next volunteer is Gloria who has been working at the Little Brook Hospital for almost a year now. She runs a weekly "music appreciation" session where she plays the piano and sings with the patients and staff.

Having volunteered before, including in her native Brazil, she works hard to ensure her volunteering experience is meaningful for herself and the patients.

"Here at KMPT, it feels like I have joined a new family. The patients pick the songs – classical or popular – that they want to hear and seeing them really appreciating the sessions gives me great satisfaction as I know I'm putting my skills towards a great cause. I have learned a lot, not only from the sessions themselves but also from the constant offering of training from KMPT."

Next we hear from Carol. When she retired she was at a bit of a loss as to how to fill her days. Luckily for us she became one of our Lakeside Lounge volunteers.

Carol says: "When I retired, it was great - no more setting the alarm and the whole day to do as I pleased. Well, that was fun for a while...but I soon realised I was wasting my days and needed to find something useful to do! I was put in contact with the Volunteer services team at KMPT who had a position at Lakeside Lounge, a café based on the Maidstone site. It's the best thing I could have done! I've met some lovely people and have learnt a lot in the process (I'm now confident using the "hissy fissy machine" - as I call the coffee machine!). I enjoy chatting to customers, staff, my fellow volunteers and we always have a laugh. Time flies when I'm there. At the risk of repeating myself, volunteering with KMPT was the best thing I've done since retiring and I'd recommend to anyone with time on their hands to 'give it a go'."

If you are interested in joining our Chaplaincy team, have a hobby or interest you could share on our wards or would like to try something new, then take a look at our existing opportunities [here](#), but don't be afraid to contact the team if you have an innovative idea as we're always looking at ways to expand the service.

[Learn more about Voluntary services >>](#)

Boundaries training for new volunteers

Cathy Bowen, our Senior practitioner for occupational therapy at the Trevor Gibbins Unit (TGU), has teamed up with our Voluntary services team to run boundaries training with our new volunteers.

Boundaries training does what it says, it teaches you about the boundaries that need to be set between yourselves and any patients you are working with. Cathy has been running this training at the TGU for some time with those that volunteer there including, befrienders, activity workers and those who help at Lakeside Lounge; but Helen Collins, our Voluntary services manager, asked if she would also be able to give the training to all new volunteers now that the training has gone online since the start of the pandemic.

Last year, Cathy trained around 50 volunteers virtually including KMPT staff who are giving their extra time and members of the public who wish to support the NHS. Every month Cathy has a half day session in the diary that any new volunteer can join so they can receive the training. Cathy is very flexible with timings, giving the training at different points in the day so there's always an opportunity for someone to join.

The training incorporates a lot of discussion and poses topics such as 'what are boundaries?', 'how do we maintain a positive therapeutic relationship with patients?' and 'what are the challenges that we might face in keeping these boundaries in place.' There is a big difference between being friendly and becoming someone's friend and it's vital that all of our volunteers understand this difference so that they're not; a) giving patients personal details about their lives, and b) not making our patients dependent upon them. The participants are asked to reflect on different scenarios and how they would, could and should act in them. We want you as volunteers to have meaningful conversations and relationships with the patients you support but not at the risk of anyone's safety or wellbeing.

This joint working between the TGU and Voluntary services is helping us to take better care of our volunteers and will help you to develop new skills that not only benefit you but also us as a Trust as then our staff know that volunteers have an understanding of boundaries. We are very lucky at KMPT

to have so many of you who volunteer with us, but we appreciate you are working within challenging environments. With this training we can provide you with the confidence and skillset to know how to speak to patients in a compassionate and meaningful way without causing any harm to yourselves or the patient – thinking about the information you are putting forward about yourself and the amount you're willing to share with a patient is important in maintaining a professional but meaningful relationship between volunteer and patient.

After the training all participants are sent a copy of the slides, a boundaries quiz and an evaluation form so that Cathy can continue to adapt the training making it as relevant and useful as possible.

If you haven't received this training and would be interested in taking part in a session, then please email [Voluntary services](mailto:Voluntary_services).

We're looking for some green-fingered volunteers

As it's National Growing for Wellbeing Week, we thought we'd highlight the opportunities we have at KMPT for garden volunteers...

Our inpatient wards and community houses all have garden areas and we are in need of volunteers to help support and maintain these areas.

Our gardens provide much-needed areas of peace and tranquillity for our service users and staff - particularly during the pandemic. Evidence shows us that having access to outside space helps with wellbeing and that gardening has significant therapeutic benefits for people experiencing physical and mental ill health.

Some of the ways gardening can help with your wellbeing:

- Provide opportunities for social interaction, enjoyment and meaningful activity
- To relax and reduce stress
- Improve mood and wellbeing
- Provide people with an opportunity to participate in alternative therapies
- Provide additional opportunities for exercise.

If you're interested in becoming a garden volunteer please contact our Voluntary services team: kmppt.voluntaryservices@nhs.net.



Get involved in the 15 Steps Challenge

The 15 Steps Challenge is a NHS England ward improvement initiative, not dissimilar to mystery shoppers. Small 'walk-around' teams comprising of staff, volunteers, carers and service users will visit wards unannounced on set dates and experience first-hand what it is like to visit one of our psychiatric wards or Community Rehabilitation Units; as if visiting for the first time. Each team is led by a KMPT staff member.

The team will consider their first impressions and note down their thoughts and observations around four themes which are: welcoming, safe, caring and involving, well organised and calm. Teams are encouraged to identify and celebrate the positive aspects they observed, as well as identify where improvements can be made. Each visit should take no more than 30 minutes.

Notes of their observations using forms provided to them are taken and reviewed after each visit, agree what improvements can be made (if any), and produce an action plan of realistic recommendations that can be made to improve the visitors experience.

The feedback received will help staff understand more clearly the first impressions of service users, family, loved ones and carers when they arrive at a mental health care setting for the first time, and how / where we can make improvements.

Visits are expected to start in September 2021 to February 2022. Contributing to this activity could be done in an unpaid capacity, although service users and carers can claim for their travel expenses.

If you are interested in joining the walk-around team than please [get in touch](#) now.

Produce available from Webb's Garden

The volunteers at Webb's Garden have been very productive over the last few months, growing vegetables and summer fruits, which are now ready to purchase. Some plants and cut flowers are also available.

We are also offering veg boxes which will be £10 each and will include a selection of seasonal fruit and veg– a lucky dip!

If you are interested in purchasing any fresh produce or plants, please contact Webb's office on 01227 812080 (Monday or Friday morning) to place an order for collection. If you have any queries, you can also contact Zoe Young on 07717 586320 or 01227 812137.

Take a look at some of the amazing produce available.



Helen entered a flower arranging competition

It was the Kent Garden show during the May bank holiday weekend, held at the Detling Showground. This year our very own Helen Collins, Voluntary services manager, entered the Kent area flower arranging competition 2021 which was named "Colour Revolution." Each participant was given a title to design an arrangement around, and Helen was given the title "Moonlight".

Helen had never entered a show before so didn't know what to expect. She was a little apprehensive but results came in and she was awarded very highly commended!

A huge well done to Helen and she says she'll definitely be entering again as it was a great experience and would encourage anyone else interested in gardening to give it a go too!



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