

# CONNECTED

Winter 2019



## Diversity and equality

Driving inclusivity across Kent and Medway

Introducing Julie Nerney  
Our new Trust Chair

Marching with Pride  
Celebrating diversity in the NHS

Stand up for love  
The BAME influence







This issue is full of colour; just take a quick look at the pictures and you'll see. Then you'll get to the stories themselves and they couldn't be brighter. It's a fantastic mix of life itself and a real celebration of culture. 2019 has been an exciting year. We celebrated Pride at Canterbury and Margate, we've joined together as a trust to celebrate inclusion and equality and all four of our networks have set their objectives for the year ahead. We've proven there's nothing we cannot do by working together.

The vision is clear, each and every one of us bringing our whole selves to work. Each and every one of us accepting every person for who they are - complete with every unique lump, bump, freckle and frown.

We couldn't be more different from one another, but with the same acceptance and love for those around us, we can make a difference.

Here at KMPT, diversity is our strength and we're all the richer for it.

Contact us by email: [kmpt.communications@nhs.net](mailto: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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**SAMARITANS**

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# WELCOME

I couldn't be more pleased to join this issue of Connected as we celebrate diversity and inclusion. I don't think I've ever seen such a colourful issue and I'm proud to be a part of it.

It's been a momentous year for our four network groups; BAME, (dis)ABILITY, Faith and LGBTQ+. They have got their feet off the ground and are really making some great progress. Some highlights for me included the Diversity and inclusion conference. I played a small part in an incredibly well-developed agenda, which included some truly inspirational speakers. There is nothing more captivating than hearing the personal stories of those we work with, or from those who are dedicated to helping others by learning and sharing their lived experience.

Learning from lived experience is part of everything we do at KMPT.

This year, I have had the pleasure of working with carers and patients who have helped develop and improve the care we provide. As a trust, we are dedicated to increasing patient and carer involvement and with the development of our new Participation and Involvement Strategy, we will be seeking to do just that.

As we say goodbye to 2019, it's a good opportunity to reflect on what has been a busy but productive year. We have seen the start of some fantastic transformation across our services which includes the clinical care pathway programme, the launch of our Support and Signposting pilot and the extension of our patient flow team who help to ensure our patients are cared for in the right place with the teams who have the right specialist care for their needs. We have also started a cultural change programme across the trust,

encouraging each and every one of us to bring our whole selves to work, with us all coming together to help develop a just and learning culture. All of this reinforces our commitment to encouraging our staff to think differently about how we provide services and how we support patients, carers, volunteers and each other.

Of course, there is still more work to be done, but I know staff across the trust will continue to embrace the challenges and reflect on experiences. With our commitment to learn from and inspire one another, we welcome anyone who has the passion to make a difference to join us.

**Vincent Badu**  
Executive Director of  
Partnerships and Strategy  
and Deputy Chief Executive





CELEBRATING  
DIVERSITY



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Julie (bottom left) Helen Greatorex and some of the executive directors at the diversity conference



# INTRODUCING JULIE NERNEY

Julie Nerney started as Trust Chair in July this year. She has already visited most services and has seen in her first Annual General Meeting but what will she bring to the KMPT family? Julie tells us how her personal experience has shaped her desire to join a mental health trust and what made KMPT stand out as her next career move.

"I left school at 17, mid A-Levels, bought a business for £1 - because with the arrogance and ignorance of youth I thought I could do it! Became an accidental serial entrepreneur and started 13 businesses in the UK and overseas.

I then planned to semi-retire, get a non-executive portfolio, write a book and volunteer. My first non-executive role was with an ambulance trust, I started writing a book and have since been volunteering for the Prince's Trust for the last 30 years; they funded one of my first businesses so I love them and the role!

Next step - reality dawns and I quickly realised I had stopped a bit too soon and had so much more to give. I spent the next 15 years leading large-scale change and transformation programmes. This is the point in my life where I learned the 'how' is more important than the 'what' and that people are the single biggest determinant of success. This is why I am so excited about the cultural work happening here. I'm really passionate about cultural change and organisational development.

If we get the culture in this organisation right where we have diversity, inclusion and safety at the heart of what we're doing, then that will translate through the actions of our staff to our patients.

Paul Deemer (speaker at this year's diversity conference, page 6) said the first thing he did when he was invited to speak at the event was to go to the website and look at pictures of the Board. I did exactly the same thing when I was applying for this role. Sadly, you expect to see a lack of diversity in those photographs. We both remarked at how we were surprised to see such a vibrant, diverse leadership team and it made me realise this trust is different. What was sad, however, is that it made me feel that it was different – wouldn't it be great if it were normal.

When you take a closer look at my career, you can see that I've always chosen roles that have a real sense of purpose. They have to connect to my values and access to healthcare and education are the biggest part of that. I didn't have a regular childhood and upbringing and if it wasn't for the education system, I wouldn't have the opportunities I have now. I've chosen to spend my time in organisations with purpose. I'm busy and I juggle a lot, but it's not stressful or difficult at all because I feel really connected with the organisations - it really matters.

The NHS is in my bones and I can't not be part of it or believe in it. I was seriously ill when I was younger so have been a beneficiary

of it – it's just an amazing institution. I chose mental health deliberately. Throughout my education work, I've seen the impact of mental health challenges on young adults in particular and increasing cutbacks in services and the challenges they face.

I also join the many staff within the trust that have lived experience. Approximately 10 years ago, when I was working too hard, I had a mental health crisis. I really know how important this organisation is.

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**“The NHS is in my bones and I can't not be part of it or believe in it.”**

Challenges have existed for decades with gender, race and sexual orientation. Campaigns, passion and energy have been put into each one to make it 'acceptable'. It's time for mental health to be the next societal change. The public conversation is flowing with high-profile celebrities, royalty and multimedia campaigns reminding everyone that it's ok to talk about mental health. It's mental health's turn. We can help change, we can help make it ok. We need to be committed, determined and relentless. Surely this should be at the heart of everything we do, everything we are as an organisation? It's part of our purpose and what we're here for.”





Sarah Feather

# CELEBRATING DIVERSITY AND EMBRACING

When people ask Sarah Feather what makes a strong and brilliant organisation, she simply smiles and replies: "Diversity and inclusion, of course."

As the trust's Diversity and inclusion manager, you could argue that Sarah's answer is exactly what you would expect, however, she immediately goes on to explain why her response is true.

"My team delivered KMPT's second Diversity and inclusion conference in October of this year. When putting the event together, we came across a fabulous quote, one which I think illustrates exactly why so many organisations need to get their investment in their workforce in this area right:

'When we include the voices, stories and concerns of people from a wide range of identities and experiences, we gain a better understanding of each other, more compassion, more sources of inspiration and a broader and more brilliant mix of ideas.'

"For me, this epitomises why we need to be working even harder to make sure the voices of our staff, service users, carers, volunteers, partner agencies and third sector organisations are represented and heard throughout the trust. Holding up a mirror to ourselves and really looking at how we provide our services - from accessibility, recruitment opportunities, fair and just policies and procedures to the type of culture and environment we are creating - is so important.

"I like to explain equality, diversity and inclusion like the ingredients of a delicious cake; the right balance of each element produces the perfect mix. Add the right temperature and cooking time and you get the perfect bake. When you taste that cake, you should be able to savour all the individual ingredients and appreciate their individual flavours.

"This example, while a little twee, is the way it should be in any organisation; the values, principles and policies of equality, diversity and inclusion should run through the whole organisation so they are clearly visible, respected and put into practice."

Sarah last worked in the NHS some 14 years ago in the ambulance







# DIFFERENCE

service as a 999 operator before going on to work with adults with learning disabilities and later training to be a learning disability nurse. It was after this time she made the move into the area of diversity and inclusion for NHS trusts in Brighton, before being seconded to the Department of Health's Equality and Human Rights team.

"I continued my work in the public sector as the Equality and inclusion lead for the Surrey and East Sussex Fire and Rescue Services and have spent the last 10 years in local government before moving to KMPT in July of this year. There's lots of exciting work being done here and getting involved in the conference has been a really good way of whetting the appetite."

Sarah lists events, workshops and training opportunities as some of the most powerful tools to showcase good practice, challenge stigma and unite people.

"I was really pleased to be a part of this year's conference. We had great support from colleagues in the planning of this event and we really couldn't have done it without them.

"Last year's event provided useful feedback from the people who attended and helped shape the programme for this year.

"The day needed to be informative, challenging, useful and engaging. Making sure people took away practical learning that could be applied in their role or that

built upon their current level of understanding about a particular topic was really important."

The theme of the conference was 'celebrating global diversity' and allowed the team greater flexibility to pull from a number of sources including a wide variety of guest speakers.

Sarah explains: "The day was split between three main guest speakers: Paul Deemer, NHS Employers, Gurvinder Sandher, Artistic Director of Cohesion Plus and the Reverend Tina Beardsley, with an opportunity for staff to participate in themed workshops delivered by members of the staff networks; BAME, (dis)ABILITY, Faith and LGBTQ+.

Continued page 8...





"The four workshops focused on specific areas including hate crime, supporting disabled staff, faith in the workplace and sexual orientation and gender identity awareness. Taking on board some of the feedback from the previous year, we kept them short and punchy so people didn't feel they had missed out and could attend all four – a taster of each area if you like.

"We were particularly delighted that METRO, an equality and diversity charity which provides community and youth services in the UK, agreed to deliver our sexual orientation and gender identity workshop. People loved it and it was definitely one of the highlights of the day."

As well as the delicious food from across the globe, one of the most

cohesive elements of the day was the theme of music which ran through the entire conference, uniting people and setting the tone of freedom and participation.

"It was the perfect mix between fun, inclusion and activity. From Tina sharing her own journey around faith in healthcare and asking us to sing 'climb every mountain' with her, to Gurvinder talking about the work of Cohesion Plus within the community and the third-sector support his group provides, music and camaraderie flowed effortlessly. The energy, goodwill and willingness to learn, change and evolve from all attendees was palpable.

"I'd like to say that it was all in the planning but, if I am honest, sometimes you set an agenda with the right people and it just creates

the right environment. You can definitely feel positive energy and this conference had a good feeling I am pleased to say.

"I have been particularly impressed with the feedback and comments we have received from people who attended. We doubled the number of delegates and over 98 per cent of those enjoyed it and found it useful for their role. Social media went through the roof that day and the enjoyment and positivity that was in abundance was clear to see from their responses and comments online.

"One comment particularly sticks in my mind from a staff member when they wrote that it felt 'completely genuine and authentic.' With comments like that, you know you are on the right path and that feels both rewarding and inspiring."







So what next for the Equality and diversity team?

"We are, as you can imagine, busy planning the next conference and are looking at ways to host mini workshops and seminars for each of the networks throughout the year, culminating in October with our third conference.

"We're instrumental in supporting all the legislative changes that are being introduced within the trust. We work with a number of partners, including Kent Police, the Equality and Human Rights Commission, NHS England and other agencies too. We have made some really useful links through the conference and will be looking at how we can work more effectively together to raise awareness of what we are doing in the community and vice versa.

"We'll be helping to introduce specific training opportunities for people from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds as well as supporting a myriad of campaigns to improve inclusivity.

"We are also taking part in the NHS England and NHS Improvement workforce race equality standard (WRES) experts' development programme. We will have a resident advisor who will work with our Board and other colleagues to improve on our WRES data - the only WRES expert in Kent.

"The work never stops and we can't rest on our laurels and be complacent. Events like the conference energise and invigorate, but this enthusiasm needs to be sustained and fed with work, more learning and reinforcement of best practices.

"I personally love the challenge of moving forward, changing attitudes and reminding people that while diversity is a fact, inclusion is a choice."

## CELEBRATING DIVERSITY



DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION PARTNERS







## CREATING A SUPPORTIVE CULTURE

Sandra Goatley, Director of workforce and communications, introduces our diversity and equality networks:

"This issue of Connected is all about diversity and inclusion and how we create a truly diverse and inclusive environment. We have four network groups, which are featured later in this issue of Connected. These groups meet regularly and anyone can attend, which is really important. It's not just for people who identify as BAME, (dis)ABILITY, Faith and LGBTQ+, but for anyone who wants to make improvements and influence the future.

Each network is chaired by a member of staff and sponsored by an executive director. All our network chairs attend our Equality and diversity steering group and share the ideas from their groups at this meeting. The Equality and diversity steering group is chaired by our Chief Executive, Helen Greatorex.

Each network has developed the objectives we, as a trust, need to

achieve and will drive the agenda through to our policies, work, patients and colleagues. They are widely recognised as an important part of how we continue to help build the culture we all want to embrace as being diverse and inclusive.

Continue reading and you'll learn about just some of their achievements so far. Each meeting, conference and event helps us all learn a little bit more about the people we work with every day. The 2019 Diversity and inclusion conference for example was outstanding. The feedback we have received has been fantastic with some people saying it's the best conference they've ever been to!

For me, my recent first-hand experience of dealing with a knee injury which left me unable to walk, drive, go upstairs, even lift anything has provided me with some very personal learning. The most unexpected hurdle I had to overcome, whilst resting my leg to prevent further damage, was the

feeling of loneliness. I continued to work from home, calling into meetings or video conferencing but that didn't stop the feeling of isolation. It made me think about more ways we can help staff to return to work, when they're well enough, so they don't feel isolated and can return to the KMPT family for support.

For me, I'm just starting to come back into the business although you may see me hobbling for some time yet! I started back by joining the other executive directors and our non-executive directors at the November Board. Just having that interaction, by coming into the office for one day, made the whole world of difference to me. I'm definitely on the road to recovery and have a renewed energy to help each of the networks achieve their objectives and go beyond. Why don't you join us?"

For further information, contact [sandra.goatley@nhs.net](mailto:sandra.goatley@nhs.net)



# FOCUSING ON ABILITY

Jeanette is the Chair of the staff (dis)ABILITY network and the Vocational rehabilitation service lead. She took on the role of Chair in April 2019 and works with a team of dedicated volunteer forum members, all passionate about making the trust accessible to all. They have started to influence trust policy and help staff in their day to day working life. Of course, it's all part of a bigger picture. The four networks are working together to help ensure the trust is an equal and inclusive employer. We spoke to Jeanette to find out the progress so far.

"The network has agreed its objectives for the year and has already achieved a few, which is great. We now have two members of the group (Helen Collins and Charlotte Head) trained as Freedom to speak up ambassadors. Freedom to speak up is a national initiative and the trust already has a dedicated guardian and 22 ambassadors. We felt it was important to have members of the group trained so they can help escalate concerns staff may have regarding their disability or long-term health condition at work. The ambassadors are a safe and confidential place to go.

"With the help of our Human Resources colleagues and Catey Bowles, a network member, our next step is to roll out the staff wellness passport. This passport will be owned and updated by staff and it will be used to initiate supportive discussions with managers on aspects relating to health and wellbeing at work including reasonable adjustments. This will help staff get the right support, at the right time and will be reviewed on a regular basis. Should staff move roles within the trust, the passport will move with

them enabling managers to have a better understanding of how these changes have made a difference and kept them well at work.

"At the Diversity and inclusion conference, along with my colleague, Nandini Shevill-Teeluck, I held a workshop which encouraged staff to consider three questions in relation to disability; what is a disability, what KMPT do to support staff and what can we do better. It was apparent from the feedback there is an immense amount of knowledge amongst our staff and KMPT supports its disabled staff well, however, it highlighted a need and a desire for managers' training on how to support disabled staff. We're working on this now and hope to pilot some training in early 2020.

"Next objective for the trust is to become a Disability Confident Leader. We are already a Disability Confident Employer. This is great and we're proud of it, however, we want to go a step further. By becoming a leader, we will literally be leading the way and setting an example to other organisations, encouraging others to follow in our footsteps.

"The next project for the group is to educate our staff around disabilities. The average disclosure rate for people advising their employer they are disabled is 3 per cent. KMPT sits at 5.8 per cent. Working with our Equality and diversity facilitator, Yasmin Ralph, the Safe to tell campaign will encourage those with a disability to disclose in order to help them get the right support. It will clearly explain what we do with that information and break down myths. Some people may not even realise that they fit within the criteria to be classed as disabled under



the Equality Act (2010) and some may have been diagnosed with a disability since joining the trust. Of course we, are also battling stigma as well, but disability shouldn't be seen as a label or something negative. In fact quite the opposite, it means that you can receive the support you need and it could make all the difference to your working and personal life.

"There is still more work to do and we need more staff volunteers to help make this happen. If you're interested in joining the network, let me know. You can attend for one meeting or all of them. How much you get involved is your decision but we hope you'll be inspired enough to stay. You'll help us to agree our next objectives and help us continue on our journey. We can't wait to welcome you."









# MARCHING WITH PRIDE

Have you noticed the air of rainbow-tinged excitement still rippling through the trust as colleagues sweep through corridors wearing NHS multi-coloured lanyards and badges with pride?

Over the past few months, the LGBTQ+ network (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning) has concentrated on spearheading the charge across the trust to raise awareness of some of the challenges being faced by the LGBTQ+ community and encouraging deeper understanding around language.

This work saw KMPT joining with fellow NHS organisations earlier this year to help support their LGBTQ+ community and demonstrate a commitment to listening, supporting and acting as ambassadors, helping to ensure the workplace is a positive environment where everyone can bring their whole selves to work. Building upon this, we, together with our friends from Kent Community Health Foundation Trust, Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust and East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust, marched in solidarity at this year's Canterbury and Margate Prides, which was a very proud moment for all taking part.

For Helanna Chapman-Shelley, Chair of the LGBTQ+ network, the participation in both symbolised the culmination of a concerted effort over a number of years to dispel myths and encourage frank discussion. It was her vision, supported by the network, to provide a place for all people to speak openly about their feelings, thoughts or concerns and to have a safe forum to ask questions

about the things impacting on the LGBTQ+ community.

Helanna said: "It was recognised that we should be doing more to support colleagues who identify in this way because statistics show they are more likely to suffer mental health problems than any other section of the population. The pressure of living a lie forces many people to hide behind a wall of shame with little or no support. We wanted to have a way of talking about these problems and offering support to those in need."

In 2017 alone, 52 per cent of LGBTQ+ people suffered from depression. Of those people, 61 per cent also admitted to experiencing anxiety and 52 per cent had thought about taking their own life, with 13 per cent actually attempting suicide.

Helanna, while concerned at the rising figures, is not surprised: "These figures are a sad reflection on a growing problem. Less than 20 per cent of people disclose their LGBTQ+ status to health professionals. It is essential that as a mental health trust we work to create an environment where service users, carers and staff are free to disclose without fear of discrimination.

"Mental ill health and anxiety can so often be linked to gender or sexual orientation and it's vital we gain people's trust so we can provide the very best care possible for everyone."

With this in mind, the network has been active in setting and achieving a number of objectives including ensuring there are trans support

ambassadors and other advocates available when people need them.

"As a group, we set our sights on marching in the Pride parades in 2019. It has been a long-held dream to encourage people to do this across the whole trust, but we also wanted to launch the NHS rainbow lanyard and badges campaign. We held pop-up roadshows which provided the perfect opportunity for people to make a personal pledge as someone who is willing to stand up as an ally."

It is true that the rainbow is now used by many companies and TV shows to show 'allyship' and this can prompt people to question how much is genuine and how much is in line with fad-marketing.

The wearing or displaying of the rainbow has become trendy, but if we strip this right back, the rainbow has been a symbol for the LGBTQ+ community since 1978 when artist Gilbert Baker was asked to design and make a flag for the first San Francisco Pride. The flag was designed to represent the diversity within the LGBTQ+ community. All eight stripes were of equal size and no one colour was used to symbolise a particular sexuality, gender, race or religion – collectively they are meant to celebrate all the different elements which make life worth living.

Flags today only have six colours and not the eight because one of the fabrics used could not be sourced. People thought it looked a little unbalanced with seven so a further colour was dropped.

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Continued page 16...











Helanna added: "The NHS rainbow lanyards feature the seven original colours to symbolise life, healing, sunlight, nature, serenity and spirit. People love them because they are colourful and different yes, but they are so much more than that; they are a powerful visual statement.

"We were strict about people making the pledge before they wore the lanyard because what it is really saying is: 'I understand there are times when you do not feel safe to talk to people about your sexuality or gender identity but I am a safe and accepting person you can reach out to.'"

The theme of the rainbow was adopted for both Pride marches and people attending were encouraged to wear all the colours of the rainbow and join the parade in Canterbury in June and then again in Margate in August alongside other rainbow-bedecked marchers. Helanna said: "I was quite emotional on both days to be honest. To see us all stood side-by-side, sharing in this

experience, was quite something. The feeling of unity and acceptance was very powerful and moving. The shouts, whoops and claps of appreciation we received from the thousands of people lining the streets as we marched in the parades with our NHS banner held aloft was genuinely overwhelming. People let their hair down, embraced the dancing and even took part in a lip sync battle - doing a mean version of I Will Survive!"

So what else is planned for the LGBTQ+ network, its members and allies after such a resounding success?

"Barry Orr, our first Voluntary trans support advisor, has just started with us. Part of Barry's role is to support patients and staff around trans awareness and offer advice on policies as well as providing literature and help to signpost people to other organisations for support.

"We're looking into new training opportunities as well as our Trans

Awareness and Support Training for all staff delivered by the Medway Gender and Sexual Diversity Centre. Plus, look out for our latest campaign, launching in LGBT history month in February 2020, called 'Come out and be yourself.'

"This will feature videos of people with lived experience sharing their stories, which are really powerful and give people strength and courage in their own journeys."

When asked if Pride features on the calendar for 2020, Helanna is adamant it is!

"I am sure more and more people will join us. We had a brilliant couple of days and, who knows, perhaps we'll encourage people to come along in drag next time!"





Sparkle like you mean it!







# LONDON GAY MEN'S CHORUS

Dan Clegg is just one of more than 200 volunteers who meet up once a week to bring some choral joy to people's lives.

The London Gay Men's Chorus started 28 years ago after a handful of members decided to assemble audibly to help break down some barriers. Back in the day, the 'gay scene' was stereotyped as sex and drugs and this group wanted to help challenge that idea.

Their first gig was at the Angel tube station in London in December 1991 where they raised money for the Terrence Higgins Trust. From there it grew and grew, but the roots have remained firmly within the community, welcoming anyone from any background, never turning anyone away.

The Chorus and its extended community was something Dan realised he needed when he started to feel lost. His friendship groups

were crumbling and he had just finished performing in one of the country's biggest events, the 2012 London Olympics.

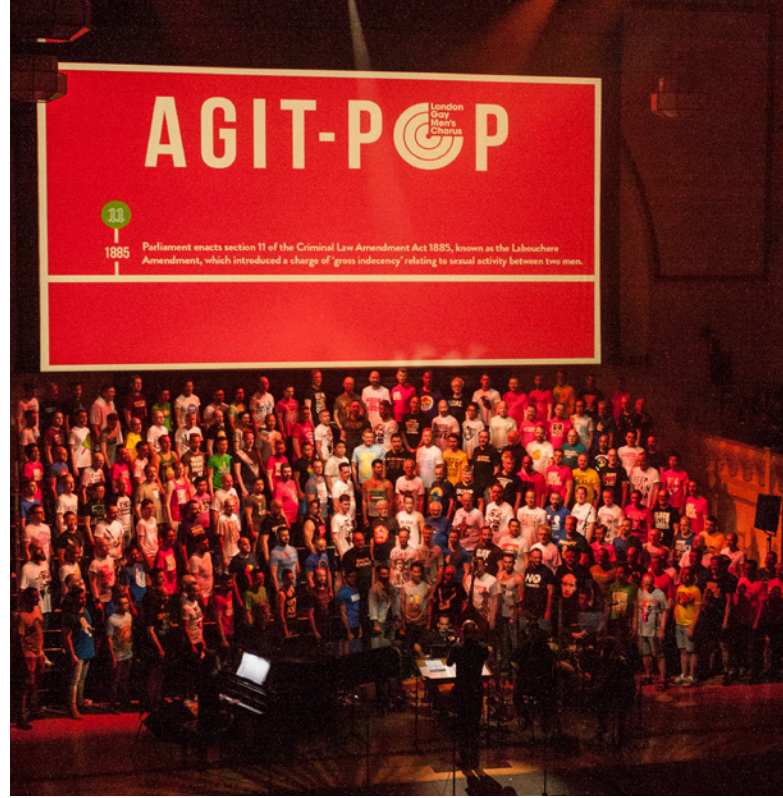
"It was when I was in my early 30s and after such a momentous event, I found myself without a creative outlet. I had been part of a performance showcasing dance through the decades. We had four or five months of rehearsals which culminated in one of the most amazing, memorable performances, then there was nothing. You make some really close bonds during rehearsals but then, with the best will in the world, you don't see them very often. With the boys in the Chorus, it's very different.

"Most gay men you meet through bars and booze and you tend to congregate with people around the same age group. Often older men get left out. Our members range from 22 to 88 years old, which is fantastic! Our oldest member is

Martin, who joined the Chorus in 2015. He had set his mind on doing something with his time, which he wanted to be productive. He never thought he'd get in, but the Chorus is not based on vocal ability or how creative you are. If you're interested and will put everything into it, you can be part of the group. We have a real mixed friendship group now; it's such an inclusive environment."

Dan explains that nearly everyone has a nine-to-five job outside of the Chorus and singing is his way of maintaining his mental health. "We have people with a HR background, nurses, managers, doctors and lawyers. I think most of us are part of the group because we have such high-pressure roles. We rehearse on a Monday evening, which is perfect. It's one of the most stressful days of the week and you go to rehearsals, create a really nice harmony with some people and it gets you through the rest of the week – it's the same for a lot of us."





Photos courtesy of the London Gay Men's Chorus

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**“The Chorus isn’t just a hobby, for me it’s something to live for.”**

The popularity of the Chorus is rapidly increasing with performances at national award shows and even performing with Kylie Minogue! But the most memorable event for Dan was in 2016, when a spontaneous gig in Soho set the bar high.

“We had done a show on the Saturday night and woke up to learn 50 LGBTQ+ people had been shot dead in Orlando. It was heartbreaking. A vigil had been organised in Soho and, as a group, we decided to join in. We went along with the intention of an impromptu singalong to raise spirits in memory of the lives that had been lost, but really didn’t know

how it would go or be received. We started singing ‘Bridge Over Troubled Water’ and within 30 seconds, the crowd stood still and all was quiet with everyone listening. As we sang, we held aloft pictures of the victims. It was difficult to get through the song without breaking down but at the end there was rapturous applause. We all felt we had done something to help the community and to remember those whose lives had been lost. It was something completely organic and something I’ll never forget.”

It’s not just the Chorus itself that offers a way to safeguard mental wellbeing. Members have started further support groups including for drug addiction and HIV+.

Dan added: “Having that support network is so important to anyone, not just for someone who has mental ill health. You never know when you’re going to need it.

I don’t think people put enough emotional investment into finding something they’re really passionate about. It’s so easy to do a job, go home, watch the TV, go to bed and get up and do the same the next day. Hobbies are more than something to do, it’s a network where friendships are formed and bonds are made.

“The Chorus isn’t just a hobby, for me it’s something to live for.”





# FINDING ME IN FAITH

"It took me a long time to find myself, I always felt like something was missing. It wasn't until I started to get closer to my faith and understand it that I began to know who I was and accept me for who I am, hair and all."

Amritapreet Kaur Kahlon, a newly-qualified social worker, is based in the forensics and specialist team in Dartford and talks about her faith as a practising Sikh with so much openness and grace, one could easily be fooled into thinking she is a much older soul than her tender 27 years.

Proud to be an east Londoner, Amritapreet or 'Amrita' as her colleagues know her, describes her formative years growing up in the heart of a cosmopolitan city as 'fairly ordinary'.

"My parents are both Punjabi and moved to England in the 80s. I would say they are quite cultured but not necessarily religious. I grew up knowing that I was Punjabi and some of the culture attached to that. I knew what my surname meant and how that impacted on my social status according to the caste system in India, but not really very much about my faith."

The caste system is like a hierarchical way of rating a person's social ranking, from low skilled people to teachers or intellectuals.

"As Sikhs, we do not recognise the caste system; everyone is equal and is accepted for who they are. Although my brother and I were taken to the Gurdwara (Sikh place of worship) each week, I didn't understand simple things like what the function of the Gurdwara was and why Sikhs don't cut their hair. Every year we would go to India to visit all the historical places but

I didn't understand the significance of them until much later."

Finding who she was in east London was challenging. With fewer settled Punjabi families in that area, Amrita found it difficult to find a place where she felt free to express herself.

"I had friends, of course, but I didn't speak about being Punjabi or the Bhangra music I listened to. It wasn't that I was hiding from who I was exactly, I just felt I didn't have anyone to share that side of me with."

It wasn't until she went to university and made friends with another girl, who openly spoke in Punjabi and was confident in who she was, that she found a new freedom in being able to talk about the pressures and anxieties related to her culture with someone who understood.

"It was around this time when I started to take more of an interest in my faith. I stopped eating meat, became a vegetarian and started to think about not cutting my hair. Up until that point I looked very much like my friends - short hair, piercings and beautifully shaped eyebrows. I certainly didn't look like I do today.

"The core of Sikhism is love and acceptance - not just of others but of yourself. Accepting the will of God and how you have been created is fundamental too. By not cutting or removing their hair, a person shows complete acceptance of their form. As Sikhs, we believe there is a spiritual connection to our hair and we derive strength from it too."

It has been two years since Amrita was 'initiated' or baptised as part of the special Amrit Sanskar initiation ceremony and accepted into the Khalsa brotherhood as a fully practising Sikh.

"I can't explain how special this day was for me. I remember throughout the ceremony feeling anxious because I could see the Amrit (sweet sugar water also called 'nectar') being given to other initiates and just kept saying over and over to myself, I hope I get the Amrit nectar, I hope I get the Amrit nectar. Luckily I did and I was accepted as a Khalsa."

Part of the commitment to the faith is that an initiated Sikh must wear the 'five kakars' or 'five Ks' on their person at all time: Kesh (unshorn hair), Kanga (a wooden comb), Kaccha (loose undergarment), Kirpan (short curved sword) and a Kara (iron or steel bangle).

"Working as a social worker requires me to visit patients on wards and my faith requires me to wear a Kirpan. I was really worried that this could be an issue, although it is firmly secured at all times, so I spoke with my line-manager. I was so relieved; after explaining why it was essential to me and my faith, processes were put in place to ensure safety measures were adhered to and I could continue to respect my beliefs."

Anyone who meets Amrita cannot fail to see the kindness, calmness and positive energy that radiates from within her, things which she attributes to her finding faith.

"I openly speak with my colleagues about my faith and have given talks about Sikhism as a way of increasing their understanding and awareness. When I have tough days, and let's face it we all do, I use prayer and meditation to rebalance me. I can honestly say that for the first time in my life it is the only thing that makes complete sense and through it, I have finally found me."







Ralph Craig





# INSPIRING JOURNEY OF A GOOD MAN

Offer Ralph Craig a Garibaldi with his coffee and he is taken to a very different place and time.

The creaking belly of transatlantic ship the SS Antilles to be precise where the four-year-old Ralph was spoiled with the 'dead fly biscuits' enroute to the UK from his Guyana homeland with his two brothers.

Their final destination was Woolwich in south London, where his soldier father was stationed. The family settled and grew, adding one more girl to the mix.

Fast-forward to 2019 and now 70, Ralph has devoted his working life to mental health care.

That is not strictly true – he was initially a DJ, bringing his reggae roots to south London and the Medway towns and beguiling a teenage music fan (much to the distress of her Canadian father). But love prevailed and Ralph and Mary (herself a volunteer for many years with the Samaritans) have now been married for 45 years and have two sons and three grandchildren.

Ralph's career began in August 1971 in Stone House Hospital, the forefather of Little Brook Hospital in Dartford. It was a private mental health facility for the City of London.

He had reported for duty at an army recruitment office, ready with 'clean socks and underpants' to follow in his father's hobnail boots. But his head was turned by nursing and he spent time on secure wards and in early crisis teams and A&E liaison, one of the pioneers involved in developing frontline services.

Ralph said: "I remember six burly police officers grappling with one of our patients who was being aggressive and me and my mate

stepped in and he affectionately put his arms around us and calmly walked into hospital. He liked us. We created that bond, built on trust and understanding.

"People have always been fearful of mental health, although it is better now. It's a lack of understanding. I always said it was more dangerous walking down Rochester High Street on a Saturday night than being on an acute ward!"

He says he was growing up in the UK when signs were displayed saying 'no Irish, no blacks and no dogs welcome', but personally experienced no real racism; his charm may have disarmed the bigots.

The community mental health nurse from Gillingham said: "I think Caribbean people and those from Ireland were the first in large numbers to be compatible with English ways.

"I've always made the point to colleagues about integration. Jabbering away in your own language was never any good for the patients. It is all about good communication. And respect. Respect for your elders."

Try walking with Ralph between Elizabeth House in Rainham, where he is part of the older people's team, and the Costa coffee around the corner - it takes an absolute age as he is stopping and chatting with every other person. "Ello mate!" is his favourite greeting.

His ability to show empathy has been the difference (assisted he says in the early days, by being encouraged to be trained counsellors as a matter of course) and service users look forward to the interactions.

He said: "Yes I can talk until the cows come home, but I can talk

in colloquialisms that put people at ease. It builds relationships and although I am in an assessment, we can get chatting about the reason there are Japanese road names everywhere or the first wooden war ship docked here and the conversation gets going. You get a lot more from people that way. They relax.

"I say to the youngsters what are you waiting for. Speak to your mum and dad, your grandparents. Get to know them. Do the same for your patients. Embrace emotion and feeling. They will be looking forward to coming to seeing you. They might be lonely with family dispersed. You can make them feel like a person again."

He has served as both a prison inspector and a magistrate, a sense of justice and fairness in his community being passions for him.

Others over the years have included riding BMX bikes with his boys and intensive Judo and Ju-jitsu training, his knees bearing the brunt of many adventures in both.

In 2013, he became a statistic. One in four black men will get prostate cancer and what was believed to be an aggressive strain of the disease. Radiotherapy and hormone treatment followed and the future is brighter. "My doctor said he could see I was still 'one of the lads' and wanted to preserve that for me, my prostate that is."

He urges men to talk about it and stay vigilant with their health.

"Life is sweet you know. The NHS has been good to me. It has been a really nice job."

Visit <https://prostatecanceruk.org>



# FAITH IN RECOVERY

Tristan brightens the room as he walks in. It's not just his uplifting demeanour, it's because he has Felicity in tow – a therapy dog and his personal four-legged companion.

He has just completed his six months probationary period with the trust, although staff around him feel like he's already part of the furniture. Officially however, he's now a fully-fledged part of the KMPT family.

## So, what made you join KMPT?

Oh, that's an official interview question! Well, my previous role was in an acute hospital. I couldn't proactively plan my day and was constantly reacting to the needs of staff, patients and their families. It was great, but it was definitely time for something else.

## What was your first impression?

Right from the induction, I was overwhelmed with how personal the training and process was. I met some fantastic people right from the start who have quickly become friends. Part of my training was the breakaway training. I left that session and went straight to my first equality and diversity meeting. Not really dressed for the occasion, I turned up and was pleasantly surprised to see the meeting being chaired by our Chief Executive, Helen Greatorex. That immediately gave me a sense of how important equality and diversity is to the trust. Executive director of nursing Mary Mumvuri is also the corporate sponsor for the Faith group. It's great that our executive team understands how important this is.

The meeting was chaired so well and it wasn't a talking shop. The group met, discussed and decided on their actions, it was so worthwhile. All the chairs of the networks

support each other and we help one another with all the projects. My first project was helping Helanna (LGBTQ+ chair) with handing out the rainbow lanyards as staff committed to their LGBTQ+ ally pledge. We ran out of lanyards at the first event! Staff were also asking to take their pledges with them so they could display them in their offices. The support was overwhelming and really showed how staff live our values.

## What is your role?

Chaplains are really there to listen to staff, patients and their families. Working in an acute trust, I was called upon for mixed reasons, some were of course end of life care. Here I'm part of someone's journey, often to recovery, and that means so very much to me.

## What are your highlights so far?

The Diversity and inclusion conference was fantastic! Music, dance, food – some of my favourite things! Everyone was there to learn or share their experiences and we're already thinking about next year.

I'm also working with the trust to ensure that our main sites have a dedicated multicultural room. We already have something in Maidstone, which includes a multi-faith box. This has something for everyone, from head covers, books and leaflets to local resources for when people leave the hospital environment. In Canterbury, we have been allocated a new space near the canteen and in Priority House we're looking at the options available to us but everyone is committed to finding us the right space. In Dartford, we're currently using part of my office but it's not the right space for patients. Staff, however, do use it for daily prayers or to pick up resources for patients. It's fantastic that staff recognise that



faith is part of someone's journey. We have a patient who likes to attend a particular Hindu temple and that is really important to him. Staff recognise this has an important impact on his mental health so they do all they can to help. That's just one story of many. It's bringing life into their care. It's what they will do when they return to the community and so it helps that transition and builds a faith-led community around them. One of our patients asked to be baptised before he left his inpatient unit. He was ecstatic and then we were able to introduce him to the faith community of where he would be living to help with that transition. In just six months, there have been so many highlights!

## So what's next?

We're working on a recruitment drive for more volunteers to join us. You don't need to be religious, you just need to want to sit, listen and help someone. As chaplains we can do so much but with a trust that covers 1,450 square miles, we can't be everywhere. Our precious volunteers help us do so much more.

I have my official licensing ceremony just before Christmas. This is a really important part of being welcomed as a trust chaplain. I will also be taking part in the staff panto for our patients on Tarentfort ward. Naturally, as with anywhere we go, Felicity has the starring role!

Interested in joining Tristan, Felicity and the team? Contact [kmpt.faith-forum@nhs.net](mailto:kmpt.faith-forum@nhs.net)









Kent and Medway  
NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust

# CELEBRATING DIVERSITY



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# STAND UP FOR LOVE NOT HATE

"As well as my dad's unwavering love of cricket, an appreciation of West Indian home-cooked food and the cultivation of a dry sense of humour, we were all raised by my parents to understand that respect, tolerance and equality were the essential ingredients to a successful life – qualities which I believe in to this day."

Simon Cook, Service manager of the Forensic and specialist care group and Chair of the Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority (BAME) network, is what can only be described as a 'people person,' thriving in an environment where the freedom to voice your opinion for the good of others is encouraged.

Simon, a child of the 60s, was born in Lewisham where flares, dodgy haircuts and plaid vests were the standard uniform. Smiling Simon recalls: "Growing up, my mum and dad would share the stories about their childhood and how they came to England. They were from the Windrush generation and were looking to find employment and a better life for their families.

"My mum and dad worked hard and, like many Jamaican families of that time, they had a particular view of life, forged by strong values like hard work and appreciation. My mum was a nurse and so I saw first hand the power of the NHS and that is what drew me to it. I will forever be grateful to them for the sacrifice they made so we could have more opportunities."

Following in his mum's footsteps, Simon's own journey within healthcare started 35 years ago. "I started in the NHS just eight days shy of my 19th birthday in my local

general hospital in Lewisham. When I look back, my career has certainly been varied. I have managed an outpatient department, worked as a commissioner and have since been involved in child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) for more than 19 years. My current role is within older adult services and I love chairing the BAME network."

The network has been running for over six years now and has more than 40 regular members in attendance each month. Over the two years Simon has chaired the group, much has changed and he is keen to share the group's current project around the production of the trust's Hate Crime Strategy.

According to the Home Office's latest statistics, there were 103,379 hate crime offences recorded by police last year in the UK.

"Although I'd like to think we are a far cry from the abhorrent attitudes my parents were forced to endure when they came to this country, the recent rise in hate crimes being reported sadly tells a different story. This behaviour is becoming more prevalent and is bleeding into the NHS too. Because of this, we have been focusing on a new policy with clear guidance notes to help support staff to recognise what constitutes a hate crime and how to report incidents immediately.

"If someone commits a crime against you because of your disability, gender identity, race, sexual orientation, religion or any other perceived difference, then that's a hate crime. Someone using offensive language towards you or harassing you because of who you are, or who they think you are, is a hate

crime too, it doesn't have to include physical violence.

"Part of our role as managers is to keep staff safe so they can continue to deliver the brilliant care they do, without fear of abuse or degradation. By making clear to everyone that this type of behaviour will not be tolerated and will be reported to the police, we can stop people experiencing abuse at work.

"The full campaign will be rolled out in the New Year and we are looking forward to talking to staff, service users and carers about the changes we have made and reminding them how to report incidents of this kind."

In Simon's opinion, tolerance, understanding and acceptance are vital in helping people to come together to work even better and to reduce the divide caused by cultural differences.

"In October, the whole trust enjoyed a month of celebration as part of Black History Month. We talked about black culture, food, music, poetry and the contribution people from all heritages have made to the NHS. It was a time to get to know colleagues, service users and carers in a safe space where people could ask questions as well as making personal pledges to remind themselves how each of us play a part in breaking down stigma and working towards acceptance of other people, their beliefs and values – something to be very proud of indeed and a welcomed step in the right direction."







# THE RECIPE FOR A BRILLIANT TEAM

They say in west Africa that a party without jollof rice is just a meeting.

Well at the Allington Centre in Dartford, a team meeting is not a team meeting without jollof rice.

Smiles are wide and spoons are at the ready when support worker Abiola Akporah arrives on shift with the sharing bowl containing her family version of the dish (with some secret ingredients of course) from her corner of Nigeria.

Abi said: "I love cooking, it is my way of chilling. I find it therapeutic. People always ask me do it and it is a pleasure.

"I have always worked in forensics, but this is different at Allington. It is so diverse. We all work together to get it done and it is like a family. We have a laugh together too, which is important. We are open with each other."

Adding to the exciting aromas swirling around is fellow support

worker Joseph Ganda. He is all about the chicken and has diligently mixed this spice with that herb to eventually come up with his winning marinade. His passion was borne in home economics in Sierra Leone. He combines healthy cooking with healthy living encouragement for patients, which is having a positive impact.

Joseph said: "Sometimes it doesn't feel like work - I come in to socialise!

"We are given a voice and we raise what we need to. We all look forward to the team days."

The communal table for the team's bi-monthly meetings always needs to be a sturdy one.

It usually begins early with a full English breakfast from an unlikely source. The man for that job is healthcare worker Ken Carreon, who hails from the Philippines. He ran a pizza house before coming into the NHS. It is with a heavy

heart he is leaving his job this month because of a family move to East Sussex. His son has been unwell and the support he has received from his colleagues has made all the difference.

He said: "This is the best team I have ever worked in. I'll not find a team like it again."

Nurse Kerry Fitness, is a fan of Ken's other signature dish; the carbonara. This week, she also tried Matilda Arasanmi's fruit cake, but it was rum-drenched so necessary to enjoy that at home.

And what is Kerry's food offering?

"Crisps and sweets! I have a locker-full and people know where to go when they need them!"

Kerry added: "There is always food floating around and it is amazing. I have never worked somewhere so accepting of one another for who we are. The diversity is nothing but brilliant.





“I grew up on a council estate in Gravesend and no one has expected me to change. I had staff taking time with me, drilling me to get me through my biology exam. When we are short-staffed, everyone gets out onto the floor to get their hands dirty. It is a great place to work.”

Praise for their matron Tricia Haastrup is unanimous.

She proudly oversees what she refers to as ‘the United Nations of KMPT’, 43 staff with a rich representation from across the continents.

Tricia started the staff day tradition when she began in the role six years ago. It was a unit that had experienced tribal issues and racist slurs. The smell of food was not always so welcome either, with complaints about ‘the Africans and their nasty fish’.

Now the culture is transformed. Her goat curry and pudding and souse (a Bajan national dish

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**“This is the best team I have ever worked in. I’ll not find a team like it again.”**

originally created by workers from elements of animals plantation owners routinely discarded) initially brought people together and then she invited people to start bringing in their own dishes and any issues to team meetings so they can be thrashed out and solutions to problems found collectively.

The gossip stopped; staff pulled together.

Tricia said: “In Barbados, if you are sleeping and someone is cooking, someone will wake up. We are about homemaking. Food is powerful, it unites. When you sit down together, you learn so much about one another.

“My values are people need to be treated fairly – be you gay, black, purple – I do not care.

“We do still alert people if someone is popping some fish in the microwave, but it makes people smile now.”

A few words of advice: Always have some Tupperware on you in the vicinity of the Allington Centre as you will be offered food gifts galore.

**The Allington Centre is a 20-bed low secure inpatient service for forensic services. It specialises in the assessment and treatment of adults with complex mental health needs, who require care in a low secure setting, in response to offending, risky and/or challenging behaviours.**



# Have we given you a taste for KMPT? Why not get involved.

We have plenty of career  
and volunteering opportunities  
for 2020.



We accept every person  
for who they are



Our views matter  
and they are heard



We learn from experience  
and share this with others



Our diversity is our strength



We're curious, creative  
and embrace change



We're empowered to  
make a difference

**For more information, visit:**  
[www.kmpt.nhs.uk/get-involved](http://www.kmpt.nhs.uk/get-involved)

