
Welcome to Volunteer Voices...

Spring has officially sprung, with a bout of warm weather and longer evenings now, courtesy of the clocks going forwards. With spring often comes a sense of starting afresh, it's a time of excitement, anticipation and growth!

Here in Voluntary services we are embracing this feeling and have been busy planting new trees around our sites (read more below) which has been a thoroughly enjoyable experience and has helped us to build partnerships with other organisations in Kent and Medway.

We would also like to take this opportunity to welcome Jonathan, Garden coordinator apprentice, who will be working at Webb's Garden. For those who have not said hi to Jonathan yet, please do get in contact with him and make him feel welcome into our volunteering community. Of course with hellos, also come goodbyes and we were sad to say goodbye to Helen Collins, our Voluntary services manager, who retired at the end of February. Helen has been a beloved member of the team for a long time and we know that many of you will be very sad about her departure. We know that you will all join us in wishing her a happy retirement.

Please remember that if you have any queries or questions about your role or the service, do get in touch with Stephen, Zoe, Clare or Louise, who will be happy to help you! Many thanks for your continued support and we look forward to continuing to work alongside you over the next season.

Welcome back Emily

Emily, was our Pets As Therapy (PAT) volunteer on Sevenscore ward at Thanet Mental Health Unit. She and her dog, Lexi, would regularly visit the ward much to the enjoyment of staff and patients.

After taking a 2-year break from volunteering due to the pandemic, lockdown and having a gorgeous new baby, Emily is now ready to return to her volunteer role and eager to resume her visits to the ward.

We are delighted to welcome Emily back, and know that the ward staff and patients are really looking forward to seeing them!

Friends for mental health (East Kent) fundraising event

The Friends for Mental Health (East Kent) are holding a fundraising event on Saturday 9 April 2022, from 10.30am at St Mary's Church in Chartham (Church Lane, Chartham, Kent CT4 7JW).

This will be their first major fundraising event they've been able to organise and hold since before the pandemic – so please join them for this special occasion if you can and show your support!

There will be a raffle, refreshments, cakes and various stalls to help the charity raise funds to help those with mental health needs and their families. This includes paying for education classes and travel, funding art exhibitions, music therapy and supporting people when they leave hospital and are setting up a new home.

The Friends for Mental Health is a charity that has supported people who are affected by mental ill health for over 50 years; both people in hospital and those living in the community. It is run by volunteers who dedicate their time to raise funds.

Everyone is welcome.

We've been planting trees at KMPT!

We teamed up with NHS Forest to help improve the health and wellbeing of patients, staff and local communities throughout the county.

NHS Forest is a national project, coordinated by the Centre for Sustainable Healthcare, which promotes preventative healthcare by increasing people's access to green spaces; helping local people to stay healthy and aiding the recovery of patients by using the benefits of the natural environment for therapeutic purposes.

Various KMPT sites have recently benefitted from the arrival of 70 tree saplings including oak, hornbeam, willow, spindle and box. We chose these species because they are all native hardwoods and will help support biodiversity, thus increasing the benefits to our environment. These were all planted in late February by staff, service users and students from LINK19 and Canterbury Academy. The students involved were also provided with the opportunity to learn more about the NHS, its roles and potential career pathways, as well as discuss the possibility of adopting KMPT green spaces that they could tend to on a voluntary basis.

This is just one of many future green projects and we'll be looking for people to help get involved and also to be part of a team to help sustain the work we've been doing.

Jonathan's volunteering experience

Hello to everyone!

I'm Jonathan and I started volunteering in 2019, at Webb's Garden in Canterbury. I had been a service user, and was on what was then called Samphire ward having been ill with Bipolar. As I got better, some of the Healthcare assistants and Occupational therapists did a walk round for patients at Webb's garden, and I felt a connection with the garden. I applied to be a volunteer at Webb's, and after 6 months had gone by since I was discharged from hospital, I met Zoe and was accepted as a volunteer. After a hesitant start and doing some gardening jobs, I got more involved and became part of what is known as the "maintenance crew". We have been doing many maintenance jobs; repairing gates, greenhouse doors, fruit cages, and currently we are repairing the entrance gates to Webb's. We also fitted a new kitchen and decorated the "cabin" so hopefully everyone who uses it finds it a better place to be.

After volunteering for some time, towards the end of 2021, Helen and Zoe spoke to me about doing an apprenticeship as a Garden co-ordinator. They knew that I had been looking for work for some time, so this came at a good time for me as I felt ready to start working again. Having applied and offered the job, I started in January. This has been a positive journey for me, since being in a difficult time in my life when I was a service user, becoming a volunteer and now working here. Volunteering helped me whilst not working, I was offered various training opportunities which have helped me to develop, and be in a position where I could start a job with KMPT. This helps me to be more motivated; gives me more reasons to get up every day. The garden is a great environment to be in, with great people, I would recommend it to anyone; even just to visit if you can. My mental health has improved which is owed in part to this.

Thank you to Helen, Zoe, Stuart and all the volunteers and staff!

Webb's Garden Open Day

On Wednesday 9 March, Webb's Garden in Canterbury opened its gates to staff and service users for its first open day of the year.

It was open from 1pm to 3pm with a variety of activities. We had seasonal produce and plants for sale, a book trolley, an information stall about volunteering with KMPT and a photo exhibition of the garden's improvements.

Staff and patients had the opportunity to walk around the garden to see new life emerging and enjoy some refreshments outside.

Occupational therapy students, Andrea and Harriet, who are carrying out their placement at the garden, facilitated activities for patients to join in, including creating a mosaic and playing drums. The garden came alive with people, the

sun shone and there was a lovely buzz of life all around.

Thank you to all our volunteers who contributed to the organisation, set up and smooth running of the day.

Bicycle Donations needed

Physical activity, including cycling, can be a good way of improving your mental wellbeing, and it's been proven to reduce anxiety and depression.

We are looking for any type of adult bike that can be kindly donated to us. These will be used by patients within our rehabilitation units to help support their mental and physical health.

We have teamed up with Bikefix, an organisation who offer cycle repair, maintenance and servicing on every type of bike, so any cycles donated don't have to be in tip-top condition either. A flat tyre, an adjustment needed to the brakes and gears or tightening of any loose bolts can all be repaired.

If you, or someone you know, has an old bike that is languishing in the shed unused or has become unloved then we would be extremely grateful if you are able to donate it to us.

Please contact Voluntary services on kmpt.voluntaryservices@nhs.net and we will arrange collection from you.

Art Group Volunteer

New volunteer, Olivia, has just joined our art group on Fern ward in Canterbury every Wednesday. Olivia volunteers alongside Abi and we hope to have a new volunteer join them in the next few weeks – so watch this space!

Welcome Olivia to our family of volunteers and we hope you enjoy your time with us.

Judith, who has been a volunteer with KMPT for around 10 years and runs the art group, decided it was time for a change. She has been passionate about delivering art activities to our patients on Fern ward and we offer our huge thanks to her for her commitment and dedication.

Judith has now joined the team of volunteers at Webb's Garden and we are grateful that she wishes to stay with KMPT and help with the continued development and progress of the garden. We are confident she will bring her passion and creativity to the garden and very much look forward to having her join the team.

If you are interested in volunteering in the art group, please contact Voluntary services on kmpt.voluntaryservices@nhs.net

Spring has Sprung

Voluntary services are involved in a Green Spaces Improvement Group and we want to get everyone thinking about Spring, green spaces and the enjoyment you get from being outside.

We are inviting you to send us your Springtime pictures. There are no prizes up for grabs, but we thought it would be nice to share your images. By sending your images you are agreeing to us using them in our next newsletter in June. Please email your pictures to us on kmpt.voluntaryservices@nhs.net.

And don't forget...

It's Volunteers Week from the 1 to 7 June! We will be celebrating our volunteers during the week so watch this space!

If you would like to send us an account of your volunteering experience, a story from a favourite day at KMPT or something special you have done as part of our one of our groups, then let us know. Email kmpt.communications@nhs.net.

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Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust, Farm Villa, Hermitage Lane, Maidstone, Kent, ME16 9PH

We'd love to hear what you think.

If you have any feedback about econnect that you would like to share, please contact the communications team at kmpt.communications@nhs.net

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