



Summer 2021

Time to say thank you

Volunteers Week took place from Tuesday, 1 June to Monday, 7 June 2021 this year and gave us the opportunity to recognise and say thanks for the incredible role our volunteers play, especially during a difficult year.

Here are some of the stories we shared on our social media pages from a small selection of our wonderful volunteers.

Charlotte Hoy

At 17 years old, Charlotte is one of our youngest volunteers at KCHFT. Charlotte wants to train to be a doctor and was encouraged by her teachers at Tonbridge Grammar School to gain valuable hands-on experience by volunteering.

Charlotte started on the ward at Tonbridge Cottage Hospital in November 2020, sitting and chatting to patients, assisting at mealtimes and helping everyone get to grips with some new entertainment technology.

She said: "Patients always enjoy seeing a friendly face, but during the pandemic it was particularly important to have someone who could sit with them at a time when their friends and family couldn't visit and staff were so busy caring for everyone."



"I wore full personal protective equipment (PPE), which was different to day-to-day life and made me feel I was on the front line and really making a difference."

Andrew Swarbrick

When Andrew retired from a 40-year teaching career, he decided he would spend more time walking. To begin with he did this on his own, but he soon came across a local health walk group, run by KCHFT and then Ramblers.

Andrew, 67, from Ashford, said "I enjoyed the social contact of these groups while taking part in regular physical activity. Having been a scout leader and involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, I quickly realised these things only happen when someone volunteers to help. I felt I had the necessary skills to lead walks so I became a health walk volunteer."

"Volunteering makes me feel I am putting back into something I was already doing and enjoying."



"I appreciate the social side of meeting and chatting to people but I am also happy to walk alone so I risk assess all my walks by myself before bringing groups along with me so I get the best of both worlds."

Carol Coleman

Carol has been volunteering at KCHFT for six years as a patient representative and public governor for Dover. Carol brings the patient and public voice to KCHFT by attending meetings, focus groups and events to make sure our services are the best they can be. As a member of our People's Network, Carol has worked with us and other patient representatives to create a booklet to be used in people's homes, saving them having to repeat their history to anyone who visits to give them care.

Carol said "It works a bit like the *This is me* booklet, which is for people living with dementia; the majority of the content was written by us, the patient representatives, so it really is patients creating something for patients. The patient voice is very important at KCHFT and we are always treated as equals with our input and ideas.



"In my role as public governor for Dover I often pop into Victoria Hospital in Deal, to say hello and see if I can help with anything.

"One day I noticed all the chairs in a clinic waiting area had no arms and it was difficult for people with conditions, such as Parkinson's Disease, to get themselves up out of the chair. I spoke to the corporate services director at KCHFT and within a few weeks more suitable chairs with arms had been organised by the League of Friends."

"It proves as members of the public, we are listened to and we can make things better for patients."

Kunle Kazim

In 2019, 54-year-old Kunle from Canterbury, was working part-time in a centre for people with learning difficulties and volunteering in his spare time with our Pulmonary Rehabilitation Team. His role was to encourage and help patients with their exercises.

Kunle said "I earned myself the nick-name of the 'task master' because I was paired with patients who were having difficulties with sticking to their exercises and needed extra encouragement.



"The team makes the sessions fun and interesting and it's been a real eye-opener for me in understanding why people live with lung conditions. I assumed many would be ex-smokers but, sadly, the majority are caused by health and working conditions."

"Towards the end of 2020, I was made redundant from my job working with adults with learning difficulties and face-to-face classes had stopped so I turned my hand to volunteering as a driver for the KCHFT staff flu programme. I travelled all over Kent and East Sussex dropping off and collecting flu vaccines and was amazed at the variety of amazing NHS buildings I visited. St Augustine's reminded me of Harry Potter."

"Everyone I met at KCHFT was so grateful and thanked me for what I was doing and they even started to ask for me by name because they said I was flexible and reliable."

"I have volunteered for other organisations, but volunteering at KCHFT has made me feel valued and welcomed. It's helped me to decide I want to work for the NHS and I am applying for permanent positions; however, that won't stop me volunteering. I plan to fit it in around my job and soon I will be gardening at Hawkhurst Community Hospital."

Supporting the vaccination programme

Colleagues at the vaccination centres across Kent and Medway would like to say a big thank you to all the volunteers who have given their time to support staff and patients.

Pictured are four volunteers who are supporting the Woodville Halls vaccination centre in Gravesend, as well as their local church and Gravesham Community Hospital.



Breastfeeding support volunteers

The infant feeding team would like to thank the breastfeeding support volunteers for their patience during this challenging time.

Unfortunately, they are still not able to offer the drop-in breastfeeding groups alongside the children's centres and health visiting team, but they will share any updates with you as soon as they can.

On a positive note, there has been lots of interest from people who would like to complete the training to be a breastfeeding support volunteer. They will be in a position to move forward with the training plan in the near future.



The infant feeding team, some of the breastfeeding volunteers, the health visiting teams and colleagues in the Beside You team have developed and are delivering virtual breastfeeding support groups. The first session took place on 17 May and there are now five regular weekly sessions. You can find out more about these sessions [here](#).

The team hopes to see the breastfeeding support volunteers back in the children's centres as soon as the groups can open safely again.

The Expert Patients Programme has moved

The Expert Patients Programme (EPP) is now a part of the Patient and Carer Partnership Team.

The EPP is a free six-week course for people who live with one or more long-term health conditions. The course offers a toolkit of techniques that individuals can carry out to improve their quality of life. The programme is delivered in east Kent and Swale.

Unfortunately, we are not able to run face-to-face groups at the moment, but there is the opportunity to do the course from home with a pack that includes:

- the course book – living a healthy life with chronic conditions
- toolkit booklet
- exercise CD
- relaxation CD.

The volunteer facilitators have worked really hard during the last few months to get used to different ways of delivering the programme.

If you live with one or more long-term health conditions, and would like to know more, email kcht.epp@nhs.net, phone or text 07944 935047.

Health walk volunteers

Welcome back to the volunteer health walk leaders (VHWL) who have restarted their health walks. We're really pleased to have you back and hear that you're out and about with walkers enjoying it again. We've had a lot of enquiries from walkers, the general public and health professionals about when walks will restart, which is fantastic news.

If you do plan to restart your volunteer role in the future, please let us know so we can update our records.

You can email kcht.healthwalks@nhs.net, phone or text 07760 163176.

We are looking forward to getting out and visiting you as restrictions are lifted.



Don't forget to look at the [volunteering page on our website](#) for all the latest news, volunteer vacancies and stories.

Thank you



Our values Compassionate Aspirational Responsive Excellent

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