

Participation Matters



News and updates

July 2022

Welcome to the next edition of Participation Matters. We are delighted to be joining up with our voluntary services colleagues to create one quarterly update for you, bringing together stories and updates from our participation partners, volunteers and colleagues.

It's been a busy quarter and in June, we celebrated both Volunteers' Week and Carers Week. Read on to hear from some of our very own volunteers and carers.

Volunteers' Week

Volunteers' Week took place from Wednesday, 1 to Tuesday, 7 June this year. We showcased our fantastic volunteers across social media to demonstrate how they make a real difference to our teams and services. Here is a snapshot of just some of our amazing, young volunteers ...

Omotola

"I am a sixth form student and recently started volunteering at Tonbridge Cottage Hospital. It is such an amazing experience and opportunity to help support patients while developing confidence and other key skills.

"When I volunteer, I learn something new every time through meeting new people and building more connections. It's fulfilling and you get to make a difference in your community".



Abby

"Being a ward volunteer has motivated me to step out of my comfort zone in different ways. It has provided me the opportunity to develop my emotional resilience and increased my understanding and empathy towards patients and their needs.

My role includes helping patients with their meals and spending time reading, chatting, or playing games with them.

Every moment is an incredible learning experience, whether it's with the patients or staff. It has helped me build interpersonal skills that will benefit me enormously."



Interested in becoming a patient experience volunteer?

Could you spare some time to support our services with phone surveys? You will get the opportunity to chat with patients and gain valuable insight into their experiences. Surveys make a big impact on how we make improvements to our patients, and ultimately make a significant impact on the lives of our patients.

Sarah supported us to develop the role and became our first patient experience volunteer last year. Since November 2021, she has made over 700 calls for the podiatry team and since February, has also been supporting the rehabilitation team to complete surveys over the phone. Sarah said we are "collaboratively working with the services to make a difference to give a voice to everyone."

For more information about the role, please email kentchft.engagement@nhs.net or phone 07584 182 695. You will be given training and support from colleagues and current volunteers.

Carers Week

Carers' Conference

To celebrate Carers Week this year, we partnered up with Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust (KMPT) to host a conference for carers and families to access support from services across Kent and Medway.

The event took place on Thursday, 9 June at Repton Community Centre in Ashford and featured workshops, presentations and a marketplace of stalls.

The day included:

- carers sharing their first-hand experience of caring for their loved ones
- carers assessment workshops
- dementia care workshops
- looking after your mental health and wellbeing
- support for young carers
- listening events.



Caring during Covid

One of carer representatives, Kay, gives an insight into the reality of caring for a loved one during the pandemic:

"Being a carer has always been a challenging way of life. When Covid hit and the first lockdown was announced, suddenly caring became much harder.

"Carers have always been expected to look after their cared for quietly and competently but usually carers are able to access help and support should they need it.

"Covid removed those safeguards. No longer could carers get respite care, extra help. Someone to give them a break. The public were encouraged not to put any extra stress on an NHS already at breaking point.

"So carers had to go it alone.

"Become solely responsible for their loved one. Keep them well and make sure that the Covid virus didn't enter the home.

"Shielding became the norm. No shopping, no mixing of any kind. No human interaction except between the two of you. The fear that one or both of you would get sick. The very real fear that your cared for wouldn't survive.

"You watch the news avidly. You count the numbers and feel the loss of so many vulnerable people day after day. You watch, you wait, you protect as best you can; hoping against hope it isn't your house next. You lose a friend, a family member. Covid is everywhere it seems. Thousands are dying. So hard to comprehend.

"Finally there is talk of a vaccine. How soon before you can get it for your loved one? Are they on the list? Will it work? The day arrives, you both get the vaccine. You can start to breathe again.

"It's been a hell of a year."

Talking Together

Raising money for HIV peer support group

Our trust's charity [i care](#) relies entirely on donations from the public and some of our supporters really do go the extra mile to raise money for us.

In fact, Steve Bamford is going more than 62 miles for us to raise money for our HIV fund. Steve joined the peer support group "Talking Together" in 2021.

It provides a safe place for people who are HIV positive to discuss living with HIV but relies on trained peer supporters. Having recently completed his own training, he wants to raise money to train more peer supporters.



He said: "It's really important to know that you're not alone, there are people locally and there's always new information available. It gives us the opportunity to discuss the challenges of living with HIV with other people who are living with it too."

A network engineer from Chatham, Steve has already taken on some serious challenges to raise money for the fund. The Jurassic Coast Challenge began at Corfe Castle in Dorset on Friday, 14 May and finished in Bridport on Saturday, 15 May.

Steve said: "I like to challenge myself and prove that you can live a normal life with HIV. We've come so far since the 80s and 90s with better treatments and a much better understanding of what living with HIV means, we don't need to hide in the shadows, in fact we need to shout about it! Five per cent of people still think you can get HIV from a toilet seat!"

Find out more about Steve's challenge [here](#).

Sun awareness week was in May this year, but as we approach the summer, it's important to start to think about staying safe in the sun.

No-one can doubt the benefits of sunshine on health. It can:

- strengthen your bones
- lower your blood pressure
- help you lose weight
- lift your mood
- boost your eyesight
- and reduce dementia risk.

However, sunburn can increase your risk of getting skin cancer, so aim to strike a balance between getting sufficient Vitamin D and protecting yourself from harmful rays.

Think about:

- spending time in the shade between 11am and 3pm
- using at least factor 30 sunscreen and reapplying frequently
- covering up with suitable clothing
- taking extra care with children
- staying hydrated.



Interested in getting involved?

To find out more, contact us at kentchft.engagement@nhs.net, phone 0300 013 2045 or visit our [website](#).

Thank you



Our values Compassionate Aspirational Responsive Excellent

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