

# Carers, Families & Friends Involvement Newsletter

## Autumn 2021

October | 2021

### 1. Introduction

Welcome to the winter 2021 edition of the SWLStG Carers newsletter.

We're fast approaching the Christmas festive season, which for some is a time of fun, family, friends and plenty. For others this period can be isolating and stressful and there's a lot of pressure to "deliver" that can leave many feeling a failure. So, it's important that we keep the period in context, it is after all, only for a moment in time, before we know it, it's over. Do what you makes you feel good and reach out if you're feeling stressed.

In this issue will focus on things you can do to help you over the festive season and where you can go for help and support. The borough news section will provide some pointers which you may find useful.

Life can be stressful and throughout it we'll all experience times when we feel overwhelmed or challenged. If it's not constant, challenge helps us grow... " a sailor n'er became skilled sailing a calm sea". We don't see it at the time but it becomes apparent later on reflection.

To help us cope better with stress we can ask ourselves:

- What is it about the challenge we're facing? (eg feeling overwhelmed with the thought of hosting a festive gathering).
- Then ask yourself the so what? Is it the thought of having people around? Meal preparation? Being alone?



## Contents

Introduction.....	Section 1
A message to carers.....	Section 2
Community Transformation, Peer Support and Lived Experience.....	Section 3
Trust Updates.....	Section 4
Sources of Support for Carers.....	Section 5
Coronavirus.....	Section 6
Puzzles and Activities.....	Section 7
Borough Updates.....	Section 8



- Then challenge yourself to take action with the now what? Try to identify the steps (little steps are ok) you can take to minimise the stress (eg speak to someone about how your feeling, take a walk and breathe).

- Seek out the twinkle moments that make you smile. A time of laughter or wonder, the colour of a flower in bloom, a smile from a random stranger. Immerse yourself in an activity and think of the feeling of satisfaction/warmth/focus eg fixing a bike, an upcycling project, learning a new skill etc.

In this issue we'll provide you with sources of help and include a few fun things too, just to add balance.

However you choose to spend the next few days we wish you a safe and healthy Merry Christmas, if you celebrate it or if you don't - just have some enjoyable **you** time.



## 2. A Message to Carers

Dear Carers,

It has been a busy year for the Involvement Team. The 4 workstreams we oversee are all areas which are seeing significant growth and have potential to expand even further. This includes Involvement and Co-production (which includes carers initiatives), as well as the Volunteer and Lived Experience Workforce.

For a significant part of the year we have had a vacancy within the carer specific role (Karen Persaud subsequently took up this role in the late Summer). However, as some of us have lived experience of caring ourselves we have high hopes for improving and developing services for carers who have contact with the Trust - which together with your continued support, we hope to make further significant inroads into our overall objectives over the next year or two.

Cultural change takes time, resources, energy and motivation. We have motivation in bucketloads and as much energy as humanly possible. We are, therefore, creating time and resource through planning and organisation to achieve our goals. Although direct carer support isn't the remit of the Involvement Team, (we are more about creating the environment for the clinical and support staff to offer effective carer support), we are also currently recruiting for a specific Carer Peer Support Worker role to pilot how this might work in the Trust.

We provided monthly coffee mornings at the start of the pandemic and established a weekly "focus group" to highlight issues and themes. In the new year we are planning a carer specific Wellbeing Event, in partnership with Kingston Adult Education and the Recovery College.

The Carers, Friends and Families Reference Group and the Triangle of Care Group oversee governance of carers issues in the Trust and both are reviewing terms of reference to try and increase effectiveness and diversity of representation in line with the new Model for Involvement that was agreed last year.

2021 was a very busy year, with carers more so than many other groups. We want to thank you for support over the last year and very much look forward to working with you again in 2022.

Best wishes

Helen Miles (Head of Therapies & Involvement), Amanda Cummins (Deputy Head of Coproduction & Involvement) and Vanessa Robinson (Involvement Team Lead)



### **3. Community Transformation, Peer Support & Lived Experience**

Community Transformation now has 2 new staff members to oversee the embedding of the Peer Support and Lived Experience agenda. The roles will develop provision within the Trust, working closely with Carers Centres, Age UK and the Mental Health Foundation. This will be in the Sutton, Richmond and Kingston areas initially. We are pleased to welcome onboard Jose Mejia and Rima Williams who will be taking forward this special initiative.



Hi all. My name is Jose Mejia and I've recently joined the Involvement Team as the Peer Support and Lived Experience Workforce Lead. In this role, I will help shape peer support services within the Trust and across some community organisations in South West London.

I was born in Colombia and have been living in London since 2015, where I've done peer research, facilitated peer support groups and mentoring programmes, and managed mental health and sexual health services that benefit diverse communities.

In this new challenge, I hope to enhance and improve the existing service provision for our service users experiencing mental health distress, and for their friends, families, and carers who day to day give their best in their recovery journey.

Lastly, I hope the work we all do at the Involvement Team, raises some awareness on the importance of lived experience in mental health services.



Hey there, I am Rima and I am a Peer Support Coordinator within Community Transformation in Sutton. My role involves connecting people who would like to access peer support to Peer Support Workers based within four voluntary sector organisations in the community. This project will support adults of all ages with a distinct focus on young people, older people and carers.

This is a brilliant opportunity to expand the reach of Peer Support, so more people can benefit from the value of sharing experiences with someone who has been there. We are hoping that this transformation along with the partnership between South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust and the voluntary sector organisations will help us deliver a more joined up support service where we work together for the benefit of people who use the service.



## 4. Trust Updates

Maybe I don't belong here tells the **Lived experience of mental health from a Black perspective**. Actor David Harewood MBE joined Kojo Bonsu, a Peer Involvement Worker at South West London and George's Mental Health NHS Trust, for a special event organised by the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) during Black History Month. Find out more [here](#):



Arts and mental health charity Hospital Rooms has launched [its most ambitious project](#) to date in partnership with South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust. As part of the development of two new mental health facilities at Springfield University Hospital, 20 major artworks have been commissioned to transform how hospital wards are experienced by patients and service users.

Hospital Rooms artists will lead more than 80 art workshops with patients and staff, which will go on to inform the artworks that are created. The project will forge a new path for mental health services, radically transforming how a mental health hospital can look and feel and making access to creative participation central to the culture of care at the Trust.

Director of Nursing at South West London and St George's Sharon Spain commented, "We are thrilled to be working with Hospital Rooms to undertake this transformational project - one of the largest of its kind in the world. As we work with our partners to develop modern new facilities at Springfield Hospital, a new 32-acre park and hundreds of new homes, we are clear in our ambition to create a community with health and wellbeing at its heart".

"Research has long demonstrated the positive impact of artistic and creative expression on our mental health. This programme of work is another way we can harness the healing power of art to support mental wellbeing of those we care for, whilst giving a creative voice to our service users, and creating warm and welcoming environments that support recovery."



As part of the co-production process, artists will lead numerous imaginative and adventurous art workshops at Springfield Hospital from January to June 2022. The programme will engage a wide spectrum of the community in a meaningful collaborative experience and ensure the new environments have an affinity with the people who encounter them.

Hospital Rooms will also be hosting a special set of workshops in collaboration with the The Courtauld Gallery at their new Learning Centre in Somerset House in central London. Each artist has taken inspiration from the Gallery's permanent collection and will lead a session that will go on to inform the artwork they create for the hospital. These workshops are free and open to anyone who has used mental health services.

Sign up details can be found [here](#).

Through collaboration with the clinical teams at South West London and St. George's, researchers at Norwich University of the Arts, the World Health Organisation, Wandsworth Council and local cultural partners, Hospital Rooms aspire to evidence the positive impact of arts intervention projects in mental health hospitals at local, national and international level and influence strategic and wide-reaching change. The project is supported by a wide variety of partners without whom it would not be possible.

*We are very grateful to: **Arts Council England, Baring Foundation, WHO Artist Response Fund, Anthropologie, Hauser & Wirth, South West London and St George's NHS Trust Charitable Fund, Courtauld, Norwich University of the Arts, CF Moller, Colart, Winsor & Newton, Graphenstone, Wandsworth Council, National Opera Studio, Matt's Gallery and Action Space.***

Hospital Rooms is a registered charity in England and Wales: 1168101.







### [First of 700 new trees planted at Springfield University Hospital](#)

The first of hundreds of new trees was planted last week at Springfield University Hospital in Tooting.

South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust and its partners are working to create a new 'Springfield Village', which will include the development of a new tree-lined public park, mental health facilities and new housing for south west London.

Trust Chief Executive, Vanessa Ford said, "We are thrilled to be working with our partners to develop a new 32-acre park at Springfield. Today's planting symbolises the very first steps in boosting local biodiversity - over the coming years more than 700 Trees will be planted across the site."

"The park will include a pavilion café, play areas, an amphitheatre, community and sensory gardens, trim trail, ponds, a new footbridge, areas for informal sports and a youth shelter designed by local students."

"From exercising to picnics and spending time with friends and family, we know how important spending time outdoors can be for our mental health and wellbeing, and we are excited to share the benefits this new space will have for people across our communities."

See Vanessa talking about the milestone [here](#)

The park will open in three stages between spring 2023 and summer 2025. Landscaping and drainage works have continued at pace in recent months, with over 100,000 tons of earth moved to date.

Gareth Jones, Sir Robert McAlpine, Infrastructure Project Manager, said: "These are the first of over 30 British native species of trees to be planted across the site including birch, alder, oak and beech trees.





“These semi-mature tree specimens to be planted range in height from two meters to seven meters and will be planted during the winter months to ensure they become established in the landscape to provide a great legacy for years to come”.

Alongside the park over 800 new homes are being built for Springfield Village, with the development also providing funding for local transport infrastructure, shops and a café, and land for a new school.

Find out more about Springfield Village [here](#)

Find out more about the Trust’s programme of investment and innovation [here](#)

## 5. Sources of Support for Carers

- **Coral Crisis Hub** at South West London & St George’s Mental Health NHS Trust – this is our new mental health crisis hub and it provides a service for patients of all ages with mental health problems who would otherwise have had to go to A&E. Find out more [here](#)
- **Age UK** – provides a wide range of services for people aged 50+ from social activities to handy person help. Have a browse through their website to find out what’s available [in your area](#)
- **Veterans Trauma Network** - Find healthcare and welfare support dedicated to veterans, service leavers, non-mobilised reservists, and their families and carers [here](#).
- **Samaritans** – If you or someone you care about are struggling to cope with life, the Samaritans operate a 24 hour telephone line, 365 days of the year. Call them for free on **116 123** or you can visit their website to find out more about the support offered and other [ways of getting in touch](#).
- **Carers UK** - With over 6.5 million unpaid Carers currently supporting a loved one, Carers UK provides vital national support and guidance for unpaid Carers, their families and friends. They have a wide range of support for Carers including resources, connections, guidance and a national voice. You can find out more about the work they do and how they might help you in your role through their website link [here](#).





- **Kingston Adult Education** are pleased to offer our latest newsletter with a selection of courses and workshops starting after Christmas. Click on the link to view the newsletter: [https://bit.ly/KAE-CLnewsletter\\_Jan-Feb22](https://bit.ly/KAE-CLnewsletter_Jan-Feb22)
- **e-LfH** is a Health Education England Programme in partnership with the NHS and Professional Bodies providing an online resource to help support unpaid carers in their day to day caring activities. Unpaid carers are people who provide care, for free, to family members, friends, neighbours, people in their communities or anyone who needs caring for.

The resource provides guidance on benefits and rights, and how to support those with specific conditions. E-learning sessions include information on the stages of caring, and how to look after yourself as an unpaid carer.

The programme aims to support unpaid carers with bite-size e-learning sessions and downloadable resources. Specialist resources on topics such as infection prevention and end of life care require registration, but they are free to access. Click on the link to find out more. [Supporting Unpaid Carers - elearning for healthcare \(e-lfh.org.uk\)](https://www.e-lfh.org.uk)

- **Ways to Wellbeing**

Life's hard enough as it is without the constant yo-yo of Covid rearing its head in the news. Do I or don't? Stay in or stay out? Now or never? The time is now and it's always right to take stock of yourself and find ways to achieve your own wellbeing. Click on the link below for some prompts on the way to wellbeing whilst staying at home and what you can do.

[Mental wellbeing while staying at home - Every Mind Matters - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)



## **6. Coronavirus (Covid 19)**

With cases of COVID-19 increasing again and following updated Government guidance to support the NHS to respond to the pandemic, we want to let you know what this will mean for you and our services.

Our focus remains on making sure we continue to provide safe, high quality mental health services for our communities, while keeping our patients and our staff safe.

Our priorities are to continue to:

- provide mental health services in the most effective way – this will include face to face where appropriate
- focus on the physical health needs of our patients, including supporting them to receive their vaccinations
- support colleagues to get the COVID-19 vaccine, regularly test for COVID-19 and maintain the safety of our patients and our staff through following clear infection, prevention and control (IPC) rules.

**As things are constantly changing, we urge you to check the Trust website and call your clinical team before you undertake any visit to a hospital site. It's important for everyone's safety, that you check first, for current, up to date guidance, before visiting.**

## **7. Puzzles & Activities**

Zoe Hammam, our Carer Peer Engagement Facilitator, very kindly shared this mindfulness exercise which is a fun thing to do over Christmas. I have tried it and will continue to use it as my “pass” for all my chocolate indulgences over the festive season. For those of you who don't/can't indulge in chocolate, try it with something else you might enjoy but haven't tried before eg a different cheese. Most of all, sit back, relax and enjoy!





## THE CHOCOLATE MEDITATION

Choose some chocolate – either a type that you’ve never tried before or one that you have not eaten recently. It might be dark and flavoursome, organic or fair-trade or what ever you choose. The important thing is to choose a type that you wouldn’t normally eat or that you consume only rarely.

Here goes :

- Open the packet. Inhale the aroma. Let it sweep over you.
- Break off a piece and look at it. Really let your eyes drink in what it looks like, examining every nook and cranny.
- Pop it in your mouth. See if it's possible to hold it on your tongue and let it melt, noticing any tendency to suck at it. Chocolate has over three hundred different flavours. See if you can sense some of them.
- If you notice your mind wandering while you do this, simply notice where it went, then gently escort it back to the present moment.
- After the chocolate has completely melted, swallow it very slowly and deliberately, let it trickle down your throat.
- Repeat this with the next piece.
  - How do you feel?
  - Is it different from normal?
  - Did the chocolate taste better than if you’d just eaten it at a normal breakneck pace?

Extract from: Mindfulness a practical guide to FINDING PEACE IN A FRANTIC WORLD. MARK WILLIAMS and DANNY PENMAN.

**SAGA** have a range of free games and puzzles available on their website for people of a certain vintage 😊. Find out more [Online Puzzles - Free Sudoku, Crosswords & Codeword Games - Saga](#)

**CBBC** is the home of tons of fun for the little ones to keep them engaged, giving you a little space to do other bits and bobs. [Online puzzles for children from the BBC.](#)

**Visit London** has a good list of free things to do in London including parks, attractions, walks and venues. Worth a look to check [what's on](#)



## 1. Borough updates and Events

**Merton - Carers Support Merton** is an independent charity that provides information, Carers Assessments, advice, and support to local carers.

What's on:

- Support for Carers via Facebook group
- “Coffee and conversation”, an online group held every last Thursday of the month with speakers and information about topics which are relevant to carers
- Online workshops around welfare benefits, carers’ rights, future planning, making decisions for someone else and managing their affairs and a New to caring workshop.
- “Complex needs and Personality Disorder Carers group, “ a six weekly mental health carers group in cooperation with Sutton Carers Centre
- We run a Digital skills projects for Carers and a Mentoring project for young Carers information on these can be found on our website.

To see our full range of services and support on offer, please visit our website [www.csmerton.org](http://www.csmerton.org)

The Vestry Hall, 336-338 London Road, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 3UD

Tel: 020 8646 7515 (Mon-Fri 10am-4pm)

E-mail: [info@csmerton.org](mailto:info@csmerton.org)

**Merton Council** - [Caring for family and friends : Information, advice and support for carers | Merton Council](#)

**Sutton** – for information, advice and details of support available to Sutton resident carers and much more visit the [Sutton Carers Centre website](#)

[Emergency support for carers | Support for carers | Sutton Council](#)



**Richmond** – for information on activities for Carers from Richmond click on this link [Mindful Memo – Richmond Borough Mind \(rbmind.org\)](#) and for general information from Richmond Council click here [Support for carers - London Borough of Richmond upon Thames](#)

**Kingston** - Kingston Carers' Network (KCN) - Christmas can be a time of fun and festivities but we understand that it can also be a very difficult time for carers. Looking after yourself, as well as the person you care for, can be challenging at the best of times but combined with the extra pressures of Christmas, it can be tricky to find time for yourself.

Our exercise classes will continue to run over the festive period and you can find out more by visiting [www.kingstoncarers.org.uk](http://www.kingstoncarers.org.uk) or by emailing [wellbeing@kingstoncarers.org.uk](mailto:wellbeing@kingstoncarers.org.uk).

We have a winter programme of wellbeing activities and events, designed to keep you healthy and well, and ensure you enjoy a life outside of your caring role. Highlights of the programme include an overnight trip to Somerset, a free meditation and mindfulness course, an eight-week theatrical arts programme, a ten pin bowling trip and lunch at a popular local Italian restaurant. You can see the full programme of events on our website or email [wellbeing@kingstoncarers.org.uk](mailto:wellbeing@kingstoncarers.org.uk) for more information.

Finally, we have a range of support groups including one for **carers of people with a mental health condition** which runs from 6.00pm to 7.15pm on the second Tuesday of every month and another for **carers of people with dementia** which runs from 3.00pm to 4.00pm on the second Wednesday of each month. Both of these classes are currently running online and you can find out more, or book your space, by emailing [admin@kingstoncarers.org.uk](mailto:admin@kingstoncarers.org.uk).

The office will be closed from Christmas Eve, 24 December 2021 and reopening on Tuesday 4 January 2022 although there will be a limited service available on Tuesday 29 and Wednesday 30 December.

If you need urgent help over the Christmas period, you should contact Adult Social Care at Kingston Council on 020 8547 5000.

Other useful contacts include:

- Kingston Foodbank - 020 8391 1100
- Mind in Kingston - 020 8255 3939
- Kingston Citizens Advice - 020 3166 0953
- Carers UK Advice Line - 0808 808 7777
- Kingston Bereavement Service - 020 8547 1552
- Kingston Domestic Violence Hub - 020 8547 6046

We wish you all the best and look forward to seeing you in the new year

**Wandsworth** Carers Centre provides a wide range of support and advice on carer related issues and activities. You can find out what's available [here](#).