Southern Health and Social Care Trust
TOGETHER, IMPROVING CARE, TRANSFORMING LIVES

Promoting Wellbeing DIVISION

VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2026

Tribute to Sylvia



We would like to take this opportunity to pay a tribute to one of our longest serving volunteers, Sylvia Gibson, who sadly passed away in July this year.
Sylvia served as a Here to Help volunteer from 2009 until very recently. She often spoke of how much she enjoyed volunteering and was especially delighted with the new friendships she made in this role.
Sylvia is seen here with her good friend, Rita at our volunteer event in 2025.



Dementia & Autism Reality Experience Training Opportunities

For the Dementia Reality Training sessions on

- Monday 5th October 1.30 to 4.30 in **Craigavon Civic Centre**
- Tuesday 6th October 10 - 1 or 1.30 to 4.30 in **Banbridge Leisure Centre**

email **debbie.smith@southerntrust.hscni.net** to book your place

- Monday 5th October **Cloughreagh Community Centre** from 10-1 or 1.30 to 4.30
Wednesday 7th October in **Killeavy GAA Club Rooms** from 10-1 or 1.30 to 4.30

email **karen.faloon@southerntrust.hscni.net** to book your place

For the Autism Reality Experience Sessions on

- Tuesday 6th October in **Culloville Community Centre** from 10-1 or 1.30 to 4.30
- Thursday 8th October in **Newtown Community Centre** from 10-1 or 1.30 to 4.30

email **karen.faloon@southerntrust.hscni.net** to book your place

There are currently 307 volunteers based in 48 wards and facilities trustwide

Newly Inducted Volunteers



Welcome Back to our Choir

Our choir is back rehearsing every Thursday evening after a well earned break over the summer. Our next big event will be the annual Christmas Carol Service in December. Details to follow!



If you would like information on joining the choir please email choir.enquiries@southerntrust.hscni.net

Next Mealtime Support Training

The next Mealtime Support training will be held in Ballybot House, Cornmarket Newry on Wednesday 28th October from 10am to 12.30pm
Contact your Volunteer Coordinator to register

Thank you!

A special Thank You Tea was held in Craigavon Area Hospital on 8th July. This has became an annual event to show our appreciation for the Here to Help Volunteers.



They provide such an excellent support to those coming into Craigavon Area Hospital who need help to find their destination.

Congratulations Caolan

Congratulations to one of our student volunteers, Caolan Fox, who has been accepted to study medicine at Queen's University Belfast. Caolan gives us an insight into his experience volunteering at Blossom Children's Ward.



"The Activity Support Volunteer role in the Children's Ward at Craigavon Hospital was incredibly fulfilling. I was very fortunate to meet so many children and parents, offering them support in the form of playing interactive games and enjoying fun activities. Furthermore, I had the privilege of spending quality time with children and their families, giving me an opportunity to enhance my communication skills with children of all ages.
In addition, this role gave me a brief insight into paediatric care and support on the ward, which is a foundation for me to build upon as I embark on my first year journey in Medical School at Queen's University, Belfast."

We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all our volunteers who have completed their A Levels and have now progressed on to University.



Thank you for your commitment to volunteering with us and we wish you every success in your future careers.

N&M VOLUNTEER ANNUAL REVIEW FINDINGS

1. How satisfied are you in your volunteering role(s)?

96% of volunteers rating their experience as Good or Brilliant.

Common reasons for positive ratings included:

Enjoyment of helping patients and families
Feeling valued
Gaining healthcare experience
Positive relationships with staff
Seeing a positive impact on service users
Improved confidence and communication skills

2. How supported do you feel in your volunteering?

100% cited feeling very or well supported, repeatedly praising nurses and ward staff, volunteer coordinators, ease of communication and clear guidance and training.

"The nurses on the ward are always very kind and helpful."
"The staff are lovely and very helpful."
"Communication from Katrina has been excellent."

3. Are there any barriers to your volunteering?

Volunteers noted barriers were generally minimal, although several volunteers in the Daisy Children's Ward reported:

- Ringing before shifts and discovering no children required support
- Limited opportunities to volunteer due to low patient numbers

While volunteers generally understood this was unavoidable, it reduced volunteering frequency.

4. How has your volunteering benefited you?

100% of volunteers responding cited the personal growth they gained from volunteering includes

- Improved confidence and communication
- Insight into nursing and healthcare professions
- A sense of purpose and knowing you are making a difference
- Social and Mental Wellbeing
- Increased social connections and fulfillment

Volunteers leaving cited A'Level studies and moving to university as their reasons for leaving



REMINDER

When you decide to end your volunteering please...

1. Let Key Worker and Volunteer Coordinator know you are leaving
2. Return your polo shirt and ID badge to your Volunteer Coordinator
3. Free your role for new volunteers

THANK YOU

Southern Health and Social Care Trust

U Matter
Supporting U to Live & Work Well

Do you know that as a volunteer with Southern Health & Social Care Trust you have free access to our health & wellbeing portal?

Website: **https://u-matter.org.uk**
Username: **southerntrust**
Password: **umatter**

Or you can download the U-matter App directly to your phone.

PROUDLY INVESTING IN OUR VOLUNTEERS

Promoting Wellbeing DIVISION

BBC Radio Ulster Recording

BBC Radio Ulster will be visiting Cloughreagh House on 1st October to see our Pets as Therapy volunteer Inis and her wonderful dog Ira. You can tune in on Saturday 3rd October afternoon to hear the recording being aired.



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PROUDLY INVESTING IN OUR VOLUNTEERS

Could you give the gift of a lift?

Have you..

Some free time on your hands

A driving licence and access to a car?

What it takes to be someone's helping hand?



We have various volunteer driver roles available across the Southern Trust area:

Role 1 involves bringing people to and from Day Care Services.

Role 2 involves bringing looked after children to and from school

"I truly enjoy being a volunteer driver. I have met some wonderful people and seen some beautiful parts of the country. And hopefully have made some positive difference in people's lives."



- All Volunteer Drivers will be registered through the Volunteer Service.
- Full training will be provided
- Mileage will be reimbursed at a rate of 45p per mile, capped at 10,000 miles per year.

For more information contact:
Email: volunteer.service@southerntrust.hscni.net or Phone: 02837563946

Could you be Here to Help?



Here to Help volunteers are the friendly faces greeting you when you come into the hospital. They help you find your ward or appointment destination.



"I have discovered volunteering has many surprising benefits. It has introduced me to great people, new friends, a new skill and a new fulfilment to my life."

Would you like to join this growing team of volunteers?
Do you enjoy helping people?
Could you spare 2 hours a week?

If yes we would love to hear from you.
Contact katrina.lavery@southerntrust.hscni.net
028 37566295

Looking after your mental health is important



MINDING YOUR HEAD ...INTO

Minding your head has information, advice and support to help people in Northern Ireland look after and improve their mental health and emotional wellbeing.
It is a useful tool to have at our disposal:

- for our own mental health and wellbeing
- to find support
- to support others

Click this link to go to Minding your head website

Students Register Now

Allied Health Professional Careers Event
on
Tuesday 29th September in Newry Leisure Centre
or
Thursday 15th October in South Lakes Leisure Centre, Craigavon

Time Slots are 5.30, 6.30 or 7.30pm

Don't forget!

BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL
ruth.moore@bintcni.org.uk

Allied Health Professions in attendance will include:
Dietetics Occupational Therapy
Orthoptics Paramedics Physiotherapy
Podiatry Speech & Language Therapy
Radiography

Volunteer Coordinators

Aine Mulholland, Craigavon & Banbridge, 028 3756 3950
Karen McCabe, Armagh & Dungannon, 028 3756 4498
Katrina Lavery, Newry & Mourne, 028 3756 6295