**Press Release**

**Volunteers enjoy well deserved tea party**

The work done by the 500 volunteers across Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust was celebrated during a series of tea parties.

The events, which were held to coincide with Volunteers’ Week 2017, took place at all three hospitals run by the Trust, with the hard-working volunteers enjoying a well-earned cup of tea and slice of cake.

Volunteers help us care for patients in a variety of ways, including driving them to and from appointments, helping staff on wards, helping at mealtimes, talking to and entertaining patients, answering phones, helping with back office functions and even recruiting and training new volunteers.

Doreen Lonergan was there to enjoy the celebration at Basingstoke and North Hampshire Hospital. She has been a Volunteer Befriender for the last 18 months, visiting patients at home who are often alone and offering them a friendly ear.

She said: “I wanted to make a difference and befriending appealed to me because I understand that it would be easy for somebody living on their own, with health issues, to become isolated.

“The lady I used to visit really looked forward to our meetings. Sometimes we’d just stay in and chat and other times we’d go out to somewhere like a garden centre, a museum or the shops.

“I just enjoy getting to know somebody and knowing that they are looking forward to having you visit them. I always felt that I had made a difference and that she was happier at the end of the visit than she had been at the start.

“The lady I was visiting sadly passed away recently, but the really nice thing was that, at the funeral, lots of people came up to me saying that she had told them all about me.”

Dave Ewing and Paul Hargreave help to run cardiac rehabilitation sessions for patients receiving treatment for heart problems. Both have been through the programme and are now helping new patients understand what they need to do and how to get the exercises right.

Dave said: “We have really good fun while we are doing it and it’s great to get the chance to meet so many different people.

“It’s also really rewarding to see them improve. When people first come to the sessions they are often nervous, but after a couple of weeks they are bounding around and have a lot more confidence in what they are capable of doing.”

Donna Green, chief nurse, added: “It’s really good to be able to recognise the efforts of our volunteers because we are incredibly grateful for everything they do. They make a difference, not only to our patients, but to our staff as well, and it’s fantastic to have them as part of our team.”
To find out more about volunteering opportunities at Hampshire Hospitals, visit http://www.hampshirehospitals.nhs.uk/work-with-us/volunteers-and-work-experience/about-volunteering.

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Photos: Doreen Lonergan, Volunteers enjoying tea and cake at Royal Hampshire County Hospital and Andover War Memorial Hospital.

Notes to Editors

1. Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust provides hospital services to a population of approximately 600,000 people in Hampshire and parts of West Berkshire.
2. HHFT has around 6,000 staff and a turnover of £353 million a year.
3. HHFT delivers one hospital service across multiple locations including its own hospitals, Andover War Memorial Hospital, Basingstoke and North Hampshire Hospital and Royal Hampshire County Hospital in Winchester. It also provides outpatient and assessment services from Bordon and Alton community hospitals.
4. As a Foundation Trust, HHFT is accountable to the local community through a system of local ownership with members and elected governors. HHFT has around 18,000 staff and public members. Foundation Trusts are free from central government control and can reinvest any surplus to develop clinical services. They are authorised and regulated by NHS Improvement, an independent regulator.

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