

Staff Disability Newsletter



Guy's and St Thomas'
NHS Foundation Trust

December 2020

Christmas edition

Christmas is coming, and we couldn't miss out on the opportunity to make this edition a festive one!

This edition is jam packed with tips for looking after your mental health this winter. Jemma Dear, The Autism Project Manager, shares with us the amazing work they are doing with the Trust to make a difference to the lives of those living with autism. We also hear from a member of the Staff Disability Forum, who shares their experience of why they joined the forum and their Christmas favourites. Also...

Make sure you scroll right to the end of the newsletter where our Staff Disability Forum Chair gives us a round up of the amazing work and progress that's been made this year, even with all the challenges that have come our way.



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A very merry Christmas message from our Chair.

Mental health support at Christmas

Whether or not Christmas is a part of your life, your mental health might be affected by it happening around you.

Christmas this year will be different for many of us. A lot has happened in 2020, and you may feel worried about what will happen this Christmas, what will be possible and how you will support your mental health during this time. Or you may have found Christmas difficult in the past, and you're dreading it again this year.

There are lots of different reasons someone might find Christmas tough. For example, feeling lonely and isolated, financial difficulties, situations or people you do not want to be around, practical worries, or experienced bereavement. Remember to check in with those around you and encourage wellbeing conversations, whether that's at home or in the workplace.

If you're feeling anxious this Christmas:

- Remember to be kind to yourself. Practice self-care and prioritise what's best for you.
- Don't be afraid of asking for help. Consider talking to someone you trust about how you're feeling and what you need to cope.
- Plan ahead. Make note of what helps you if you sometimes experience flashbacks, panic attacks or dissociation, and keep it with you.
- Get support. If you're struggling, you may want to find support for your mental health. Make a list of any services that you might need and their Christmas opening hours. Samaritans available to talk to 24/7. Contact them on: 116 123

**Staff Disability
Forum**

The Autism Project

About the project

The Autism Project (TAP) is a Supported Internship run by CareTrade - a London based Charity supporting autistic adults into employment. CareTrade was founded to address the lack of opportunities for autistic adults leaving school and beyond, to lead purposeful and fulfilled lives. CareTrade recognises that being in employment is the biggest single factor that will transform the life of an autistic person; it opens up a whole new world, giving young people a purpose, friendships and social interaction, and independence.

The Autism Project aims to enable young autistic adults to make the transition from education to employment with confidence and independence. It does this by supporting students in work placements in order for them to experience real life working environments, this is paired with class based employability and functional skills learning.

The Autism Project has worked with GSTT for over ten years and in that time we have worked with over 30 departments throughout the trust. GSTT mentors have been fundamental to our students reaching their goals and we now have 12 students that have gone on to find paid work within the trust. All of our students have a job coach who is there to support our students when needed in order that mentors do not have an increased workload, in many departments we have heard back that students become a huge help and with the support of their job coach soon become one of the team.

If you have an autistic employee, colleague or are hosting a TAP student; CareTrade offers free autism awareness training, if you are interested please contact jemma.dear@caretradeuk.org

CareTrade is also a provider of 'Access To Work', an in work government funded scheme to support disabled employees, staff can ask their employer if they are eligible or email info@caretradeuk.org for more information and advice



Supporting an autistic employee

Jemma Dear, manager at The Autism Project, has shared with us her top tips for supporting an autistic employee. Please share these with your manager or someone you think may find this useful.

Top tips:

1. Be clear when giving instructions; not too many at once and give information in manageable chunks
2. Do not use complicated language or metaphors—say what you mean
3. Ensure the person understands what you have said by asking them to repeat back what they need to do
4. Show the person how to do something as well as explaining verbally
5. Some people benefit from written instructions or pictures and to have access to a timetable of their task for the day/week (remember to be clear about start/finish/break times)
6. If someone makes a mistake, do not hint—be direct (in a nice way!) and explain how to do the task again. It often helps to explain why
7. Let staff know about changes to routine/schedule/environment in advance
8. If someone appears anxious try to find out the reason. Ask them if they want to take a break, or have a chat.
9. If a person appears distracted when working, it may be that they need a clear work space to help them focus or a quieter environment
10. Have someone who is a 'buddy' or mentor who they can go to for support



Trust wide news

Showing we care about you

The Guy's and St Thomas' **Showing we care about you programme** is central to the Trust's people strategy and offers you a wide range of benefits and support to help in your professional, personal and family life.

The programme is made up of four key areas of support:

- Health and wellbeing
- Financial wellbeing
- Career development
- Value and recognition



Visit the Showing we care about you page over on the GTi to find out more information about what is available.

Supporting your health and wellbeing in response to COVID-19

The Guy's and St Thomas' Health and Wellbeing team have been working hard to enhance the health and wellbeing resources available to support you and your team in response to COVID-19.

You can find out more information on this over on the **COVID-19 wellbeing support page** on the GTi.

Don't forget to check out the guides and top tips that will signpost you to support pages with advice for managing your wellbeing through turbulent times.

Although its Christmas you still have access to all staff wellbeing services.

This includes:

- **Employee assistance programme (EAP)** - providing fast and free access to counselling and expert help, either by phone, online or face-to-face, when you need it, 24 hours a day. Provided by Care First. You can contact them on: **0800 174 319**
- **NHS national staff support line** - free wellbeing support helpline for NHS staff on **0300 131 7000**. This is operated by the [Samaritans](#) and available from 7am–11pm, seven days a week, providing confidential listening from trained professionals and specialist advice. Covering coaching, bereavement care, mental health and financial help. A 24/7 text service is also available - simply text **FRONTLINE** to **85258**
- **Wellbeing zones and Rest and recharge areas** - quiet areas where you can come and take some time out to reflect and take a breather away from your busy job.
- **Freedom to speak up guardians** - visit their page on GTi to find out how to get in touch.
- **Spiritual care** - email chaplains@gstt.nhs.uk or in an emergency call **020 7188 1187**
- **One to one psychological support** - varying from an informal one off session to more structured weekly support based on your needs. Please email the team for more information: covid-19staffwellbeing@gstt.nhs.uk
- **Bereavement support** - Please visit the dedicated GTi page for more information. You can also contact the National bereavement support line on: **0300 303 4434** Operated by [Hospice UK](#) and free to access from 8:00am – 8:00pm, seven days a week.

Get involved

Member contribution

My story - Luca Borrelli

I work as administrator at Education Centre and I've been doing this role since in 2016, when I did as apprenticeship and then got hired in 2017.

The reason why that I've joined the forum is because I believe is fantastic opportunity for me to get to know to other people around the Trust. It makes me feeling confident by speaking up with others.

My favourite things about Christmas is that I like having Christmas party with lots of people for example, with my family and friends. Before COVID 19 insisted, few times I had arranged to have Christmas lunch meal with my colleagues such as going to the Shephard hall. Last year, we were lots of us and had lovely meal. I like also going to my church with my family and having Italian sea food meal on Christmas eve (which that's what Italy have every year) and also on Christmas day we have roast turkey/chicken. This year, we will do as Christmas Virtual Party.'



Get crafty this Christmas

Mind charity have launched an array of activities so you can get crafty this Christmas.

Find some inspiration over on:

<https://www.mind.org.uk/get-involved/donate-or-fundraise/do-your-own-fundraising/crafternoon/crafty-templates/>

A few of our favourite:



Up-coming Awareness Day's

World Braille Day

4th January 2021

World Braille Day is an opportunity to raise awareness of the issues impacting those who are blind or visually impaired within our society. The invention of braille has transformed accessibility for those with visual impairments and promotes equal opportunities. It is hoped that by highlighting the methods which we can implement to support those who are blind, the world will make greater attempts to promote inclusion.

Our next Staff Disability Forum meeting

January—date TBC

Microsoft Teams

The staff disability forum is a safe space for staff to discuss physical and mental health needs in the workplace. The forum aims to provide support for staff members with disabilities and to managers in making reasonable adjustments. It also supports the WDES (Workforce Disability Equality Standard).

To get involved email:

Jenny.Hull@gstt.nhs.uk

Thank you...

Message from GSTT Staff Disability Forum Chair



Dear Members,

I hope you are keeping well during these difficult times. It seems a very long time ago since we first went in to lockdown **16 March 2020**.

I would like to take this opportunity to **thank you** for all your efforts during 2020, as a forum we have all worked hard to ensure that our work continued and that all members had access to on-going support. You should all be very proud of the achievements that we have made and I am excited to work with you next year to discuss and formulate our plans for 2021.

Our main **Objectives for 2020** were to increase our membership and this year our membership has increased by a third which is very impressive. We also wanted to raise awareness and provide support for staff who wished to share or declare their disability or Long term health condition and this was addressed via **Disability Awareness week** and through our first podcast. So both our main objectives for 2020 have been achieved.

As we continue to grow in size we will be identifying and assigning key roles to those members who are able to provide support.

This year we have appointed a communications team and we will be looking to assign other roles that will help the forum run more efficiently.

If you celebrate Christmas I would like to wish you a Merry Christmas and if not I would like to wish you a Happy holiday season. I hope that you will all get to take some time off and recharge the batteries!

I would personally like to give thanks to the following people who have provided extra support this year, thanks to my Co-chair **Dino Williams, Anna Poppmacher** for all the Meeting and Membership Admin, **Siobhan Champion** and **Jesse James**, our comms team and our EDI support, **Sam Allen-Harper**. Also thanks to **Natacha Kitoti** for keeping our GTi webpage updated and **Rachael Hammond** for creating our new look and feel.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas/Holiday Season and a Happy and Healthy new year.

Jenny

Jenny Hull

GSTT Staff Disability Forum Chair

Staff Disability
Forum

Wishing you a Merry Christmas