

# Winter Ward Companion Initiative

## NNNG series profiling nutrition innovations and developments



**Georgie Adams,**  
NNNG Communications Officer

### In the first of an NNNG series profiling nutrition innovations and developments, we open with Portsmouth Hospitals University NHS Trust – Winter Ward Companion Initiative

One of the opportunities available as a Winter Ward Companion was to join our Family Liaison Service. This service was created as part of Portsmouth Hospitals University's (PHU) COVID-19 response plan in March 2020 and has become an integral part of its patient experience team. Our family liaison officers (FLOs) provide calls with our patients and their loved ones, whether by telephone or video call, enabling connections that stretch across the globe. As a non-clinical member of the ward team, they also provide general wellbeing support to our patients, supporting with activity items such as books, puzzles, basic toiletries and mealtime assistance. They are also privileged to support patients at both difficult and celebratory times, perhaps enabling them to attend a virtual funeral or celebrate a new birth in their family.

Liz Rix, chief nurse at PHU, said: *"The Winter Ward Companion scheme is a great opportunity for our non-clinical colleagues to gain experience in a clinical setting and enhance the care of our patients. We have had a brilliant response already and thank everyone who has dedicated their time to offering additional support to our patients."*

Our FLOs are easily identified by their red tops and we were absolutely delighted to be part of the Winter Ward Companion scheme and grow our 'red top' team. This additional support has helped our service respond to demand peaks for our video calls – for example in January we were completely focused on meeting demand for calls with a massive 867 connections made. It has also been invaluable in forging new connections between teams and raising awareness of our Trust value 'working together for patients.' It enabled non-clinical staff to have direct patient contact and

appreciate the value of how their normal 'day' job can influence the care and experience received. They bring a whole new set of skills and their enthusiasm has been amazing to see as they embrace the opportunity to get involved.

Michelle Lobo, Family Liaison Service manager, said: *"The Winter Ward Companion scheme has been a fantastic opportunity for people to get directly involved in supporting non-clinical care for our patients, and it has not only enhanced our patients' wellbeing, but that of the Winter Ward FLO volunteers and our service too. Our FLO motto is: 'it's the little things that make a big difference' shows the many ways they can support a patient, from enabling them to talk virtually to their loved ones, to keeping them company at mealtimes."*

Lauren Farmer, Organisational Development Practitioner, volunteered for the mealtime companion role. She said: *"I originally heard about the mealtime companion role from the all-staff comms, and immediately thought that I could help. I volunteered because I wanted to be able to help with the winter pressures of the hospital in any way that I could, and being a mealtime companion, I felt that this could be achieved. If I took just some pressure off the ward staff, by volunteering my time, then this would definitely be worthwhile, to free them up to carry out more clinical focused tasks. I volunteer weekly to support the ward to prepare patients for their lunchtime meal. I support with handing out the meals, providing patients with the correct cutlery and opening packets and containers where this may be difficult. I also provide support to any patients who may need it while they are eating such as chatting and offering encouragement. I really enjoy the role."*

**The NNNG – We welcome good news stories from all aspects of healthcare with an interest in nutrition support.**

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