

Hospital Maidstone

March 2026

Hello and welcome to our March edition of our Carer Support Newsletter

Spring is in the air, the days grow longer and the blossoms appear. I was so looking forward to some sun after this long weeks of rain and grey. It really lifts my mood.

As nature renews itself, perhaps this season can be a prompt to pause and ask: "What do I need?" Self-care is often the first thing carers sacrifice. Small things can have a big impact:

- *stepping outside for some minutes of fresh air and some sunshine*
- *reaching out for a friend for a cuppa and a chat*
- *being creative*

May this season bring you some rest and joy and the reassurance you are not alone in your journey!

Jutta and our Cygnets Hospital Maidstone Carer Support Team



Good

I'm really pleased to share following our report published in February 2026 that our **Cygnets Maidstone** has been rated "**Good**" in all five areas following the CQC inspection.

Inspectors heard very positive feedback from patients and carers across all services, with people saying they felt safe, supported and genuinely cared for.

Carers told the CQC they felt well informed and confident in the care their loved ones receive.

The report highlights our strong focus on person-centred care, with patients involved in decisions and outcomes described as consistently

good, particularly in acute and PICU services.

The housekeeping staff had a regular visible presence on the ward. They were kind, friendly and understood the needs of the ward.

Wards were found to be clean and well maintained, and care planning was recognised as a real strength — personalised, recovery-focused and inclusive of families.

Our teams were praised for their kindness, compassion and day-to-day support.

Inspectors also noted the wide range of therapeutic and recreational activities available, and the positive culture of involvement across the hospital, including community meetings and patient-led initiatives.

Thank you, as always, for the vital role you play — your partnership helps us continue to provide the supportive environment highlighted in this report.

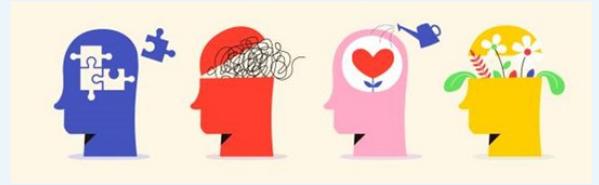
Patients said staff were kind, caring and compassionate and that they took an interest in their wellbeing and supported them to recover

Patients said staff were friendly and there were always staff around if they needed support.

Laurie Burleton
Hospital Manager

Activities in and around the hospital — part 2

Our dedicated **Psychology team** are supporting our patients in hospital on their individual journey of recovery. The support is individualized and has different approaches and settings like:



Art and Wellness Group

Use art and creativity to explore your imagination in a safe space

Woodwork, Art and Wellbeing Substance misuse group

this substance misuse or focuses on supporting patients to manage their triggers to relapse

Chilled space

this focuses on embedding mindful practices into everyday life to feel relaxed and manage stress

Saltwood psychology drop-in group

this is focuses on bringing psychological models and tools that patients can apply to their lives and to support them to work towards their rehabilitative goals.

Bearsted group

focuses on emotional regulation skills building.

Cross-ward understanding emotions group

this is a 12 week group focused on increasing awareness of emotions, how to deal with complex feelings and understanding how awareness of physical body sensations can help emotional management.

Cross-ward Kingswood group

this focuses on psychoeducation and supporting patients to increase their awareness of how to manage their mental health and develop coping strategies.

DBT Group on Roseacre

twice a week and homework club to review learning from the sessions; this focuses on building dialectical behavioural therapy skills.

Green Garden Walk Group

Go to the hospital gardens for a chat with the team

Spring Gardening Club

Explore the art of gardening and spending time with nature.

Sleep Clinic

Spend time improving your relationship with sleep and the effect this has on wellbeing

Drop-In Clinic

Chat with the Assistant Psychologist for a check-in

Coffee & Chat Group

Get off the ward to have a coffee in the café with the team

Psychoeducation Group

Explore our experiences and coping skills

Psychology Workshop

Explore some quick and easy skills to manage extreme emotions and distress

Individual sessions:

1:1 support provided by the psychology team

Carer Family and Friends Strategy 2025 –2028 launched

In November 2025 Laura Sheridan, Group Head Carer & Service User Engagement, shared the Cygnet Carer, Family and Friend Strategy 2025 – 2028 at an event in Cygnet Churchill which was attended by guests representing our Carers Network.

In the recovery and wellbeing of the people we care for, and ensure that the carer's voice is listened to and acted upon." Laura said: "Carers, families and friends play a vital role in the lives of the people we support. Their knowledge, compassion and lived experience enrich our services in ways no training or policy could ever replace. When carers are recognised, supported and included, outcomes improve not only for the person receiving care, but for the whole family and community. This is more than a strategy. It is a commitment: to listen, to learn, and to lead the way in carer partnership."

Shane Mills, Group Executive Director of Nursing, said: "As Board Sponsor for Carer, Family and Friends Engagement, I am honoured to support this strategy and the important work it represents. This strategy sets out a clear, ambitious plan to strengthen how we recognise, involve, and support carers across Cygnet.

"As Board Sponsor, I will provide the leadership to ensure that carer engagement remains a priority across Cygnet. Together, we will continue to recognise the essential role carers play



8th of March



HIGHLIGHTING WOMEN CARERS

According to Carers UK, nearly 58% of unpaid carers are women. Many are juggling jobs, family life, and their own wellbeing while also caring for someone they love. It's a demanding role, and one that frequently comes with financial strain, emotional stress, and sacrifices in career and personal time. Some are even forced to give up work completely, putting their career aside and dreams they had for their lives.

The evidence in State of Caring 2024 and a range of research show that women are adversely affected by unpaid caring roles. Restricted incomes from employment and inadequate social security mean that many are not able to reach a basic standard of living. Meanwhile, as their caring roles increase in intensity, more and more unpaid carers are forced to neglect their own health and wellbeing to concentrate on the needs of the cared for person. Finally, a lack of health and social care support mean that too many carers are unable to access the support that they desperately need.

(Carer UK State of Caring 2024 report– Experience of Female Unpaid Carer)

MORE INFORMATION:

<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/partners-care-and-health/improving-support-unpaid-carers/supporting-unpaid-carers-lga>

<https://www.carehomeprofessional.com/international-womens-day-2025-10-facts-about-women-who-are-unpaid-carers/>

<https://www.randstad.co.uk/employers/diversity-inclusion/understanding-womens-role-todays-care-sector/><https://www.carersfirst.org.uk/news-and-stories/women-and-unpaid-care/>

Involve Kent Carers' Forum – 25th February 2026



Our Carer Lead had the privilege to participate at Involves Carers' Forum. Which is an opportunity for those caring unpaid for an adult family member, partner, or friend, to meet, gain information about services in the community, and have their voices heard. Services were welcomed to discuss topics including caring for people with a mental health diagnosis, lasting power of attorney, citizens advice bureau services, and how to make savings on utility bills.

Our Carer Ambassador Matthew McKenzie spoke about caring for someone with a mental health diagnosis and the Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework.



What stayed with me

What stayed with me most wasn't just the agenda or the presentations.

It was:

- The older carer quietly nodding as I spoke about emotional exhaustion.
- The new carer asking, "Is it normal to feel this angry sometimes?"
- The male carers who stayed behind to speak to me privately.
- The carers from minority backgrounds who spoke about cultural barriers and stigma.

Matthew Mc Kenzie
Cygnat Carer Ambassador



After the success of our first **SPRING Craft FAIR** we are inviting you to our next one.

It will be held on
Friday, 24th of April

More information will follow soon!

Next Online Carer Support Group Meeting

March 11th 6:00—7:00 pm

For more information see flyer

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