

**Changing lives,
pioneering care.**



Rising to the Challenge

**Our response to the
COVID-19 emergency**

December 2020

Hospital Heroes Appeal: together, we have made a real difference

King's College Hospital received their first COVID-19 patient on 3 March 2020. With our hospitals right on the front line of the greatest health crisis in generations, we as their Charity rose to the challenge to provide additional practical, emotional and psychological support to our heroic NHS staff, vulnerable patients and their families.

On 23 March 2020, the day the first national lockdown was announced, we launched our very first emergency appeal: the Hospital Heroes Appeal. We were blown away by the response. Our amazing community of supporters from all walks of life came together to support the hospitals, staff and patients in so many different ways. They ran, hopped and skipped, hosted virtual film nights and movie marathons, donated gifts and services, and gave so generously to our appeal. In a matter of months, they raised an astonishing £940,000. We simply cannot say thank you enough.

The intense pressure of the first wave meant that NHS staff were working unplanned back-to-back shifts, often unable to go home for days. Exhausted, they were in desperate need of basics like fresh underwear, shower

gel and toothpaste. As well as offering immediate practical help, like distributing food, toiletries, clothing and PPE, the overwhelming generosity of our supporters made it possible for us to create a safety net of essential support and wellbeing services. Thanks to their support, we have been able to:

- **Set up wellbeing hubs, which offer a warm and welcoming space away from the wards for staff to rest and recuperate.**
- **Provide ongoing emotional and mental health support for staff and patients, including specialist psychological and bereavement services.**
- **Fund vital research into virtual rehabilitation for COVID-19 survivors.**
- **Provide funding for the recovery and rehabilitation of intensive care patients to help them recover from the psychological trauma.**
- **Appoint a full-time occupational therapist to support COVID-19 survivors.**



“
Our Hospital Heroes Appeal was a promise to staff and patients – a promise that we would not leave them to face the pandemic alone. We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who has given so much so willingly – you have helped us keep our promise.”

Gail Scott-Spicer, Chief Executive, King's College Hospital Charity



“

It's been amazing how people have opened their hearts and their hands.”

Kay

- Deliver healthy and nutritious meals, hot and cold drinks, groceries, clothing and PPE to staff.
- Provide staff with toiletries, specialist hand cream and beauty products for some much-needed self-care.
- Distribute 34 electronic tablets and offer access to mobile phones and charging facilities to help isolated patients connect with their loved ones, who, in return, can receive important face-to-face medical updates from staff.
- Order instant cameras, which enable staff to create photo-ID badges so that patients can still see the reassuring smile behind the PPE.
- Purchase two-way baby monitors to help nurses who are alone for hours on end caring for a patient in an isolation room to communicate with their colleagues.
- Obtain mini whiteboards and pens to facilitate communication between patients and staff.
- Purchase radios, personal DVD players, DVDs, puzzles, games and books to help patients fight boredom and loneliness.

- Supply Home Hampers, containing essential food and toiletries, for COVID patients who would otherwise be returning home to empty cupboards after being discharged from hospital.
- Support the induction of 150 student nurses who worked so hard to graduate early to go straight to work on the front line.
- Create prominent, supersized posters and wall art within the hospitals to share the community's uplifting messages of support with staff who are working tirelessly to care for others.



“

King's is a truly special place. During the first wave, we were one of the busiest intensive care services, with the sickest patients in the busiest region – yet, with what appears to be some of the best outcomes. What I'm most proud of is being an employee of King's. Being a doctor, in a job I love, surrounded by extraordinary people who collaboratively achieve extraordinary things every day.”

Dr Tom Best, Clinical Director of Critical Care
at King's College Hospital



£215,000

is our commitment to investing in staff, including one year's funding for bereavement service staff, a full-time psychologist for the wellbeing hubs, and the appointment of a permanent team to ensure the hubs can continue to be manned seven days a week.



£186,500

has been invested in survivor recovery, including vital research into virtual rehabilitation and the mental health needs of survivors, occupational therapy for those recovering from COVID-19 and one year's funding for a five-person multidisciplinary team dedicated to the recovery of intensive care patients.



£196,000

will ensure that bereaved families and staff receive the support they need, including family liaison support, condolence materials and therapeutic bereavement counselling.



£136,000

is the amount we have spent to date improving the lives of hardworking staff and vulnerable patients in hospitals.

Practical and essential help

Lives have been improved and spirits lifted thanks to the thoughtfulness and generosity of our supporters. Alongside our neighbouring community and local and national funders, hundreds of people donated their time, services and goods to benefit exhausted staff and vulnerable patients, who were unable to access the very basics. From coffee to hand cream, hot meals to clothing, and many more items in between, the considerate donations for staff and patients were so gratefully received.

Kay, a practice development nurse, explains that staff did not have to worry about what they were going to eat when they could not go outside or did not have time to queue in a shop, “I could see that the night staff who were just finishing had food to take home with them. They didn’t have to go to the shops, they could just go straight home. It is those little things that made a difference”. We also distributed 1,500 hero boxes for staff, which included shampoo, conditioner, a toothbrush, toothpaste, shower gel, a hairbrush, activity books and much more. “When you are wearing all of that PPE you feel really gross”, says Laura, who usually works as matron for paediatric outpatients but had been redeployed to a paediatric COVID ward during the first wave. “It’s horrible and all you want is to do is wash your face or brush your teeth.” Sometimes, it is the simple things that can make all the difference.

- **Toiletries: from shower gel and toothpaste to luxury pampering products.**
- **Food, drinks and groceries, including nutritious hot meals for staff on COVID wards, groceries, fresh fruit, vegetables and thousands of juices and smoothies.**
- **Thousands of wellness boxes, containing uplifting messages from the community and essential items like toothpaste, tea and energy snacks.**
- **4,000 surgical gowns to protect staff on the front line.**
- **34 electronic tablets, of which 14 were generously donated, to help patients stay in touch with loved ones.**
- **Clothing, including t-shirts and sweatshirts, for staff to change into after working long shifts.**



“

After 12 hours in a PPE kit, you cannot underestimate what a difference it makes to be greeted with groceries to take home or something to eat or drink. It may seem small but to the staff it is unbelievable. Just to know people are thinking of us is more than you can ever realise. Thank you.”

Professor Nicola Ranger, Chief Nurse & Executive Director of Midwifery



- **Rehydration sachets, which prove so useful for doctors and nurses who are unable to keep themselves properly hydrated because of the constraints of their PPE.**
- **Face shields, hand-sewn face masks and linen laundry bags with uplifting messages of support and gratitude.**
- **Snacks and treats, including Easter eggs that lifted the spirits of patients and staff who were in hospital and away from their families over Easter.**
- **Three Theragun massage machines to help with occupational therapy.**
- **Magazines, activity books and DVDs to help combat the boredom and loneliness of isolation.**

Respite and recuperation

During the peak of the first wave, social-distancing rules prevented staff sitting or gathering in the canteen or coffee shops on site. Without the opportunity to physically or mentally step away from the wards, there is little relief from the stresses of their working day. Thanks to the Hospital Heroes Appeal, we were able to set up new wellbeing hubs in King's College Hospital and the Princess Royal University Hospital.

The hubs offer a warm and welcoming space where staff can get a hot or cold drink, have something to eat, chat to colleagues and, if need be, seek the support of a trained psychologist. The rooms are fitted with a coffee machine and tea urn, a fridge, freezer and microwave, and are stocked with food, drinks, toiletries and beauty products. Comfortable chairs, soft lighting and aromatherapy diffusers create a relaxing social space that is a world away from the hospital wards and isolation units. Used by over 2,000 people every day, the wellbeing hubs are a huge success.

As well as using the rooms to take a break and have a cup of tea, staff say that the hubs helped to foster moral support between colleagues. Many were redeployed during the pandemic and had to learn new skills, as well as navigate unfamiliar and highly stressful situations. Having this safe space to unwind and support each other made it a lot easier to cope.



“

Many have told me the hubs are the best part of their day.”

Renato

Earlier this year, Renato started his new job in the cardiology department at King's College Hospital. Not long after the pandemic began, he was temporarily redeployed to work in one of the wellbeing hubs. He says, “I have met many staff working on the COVID front line. A lot of them come into the hub feeling tired and sad because they deal with a lot of stuff. But in the hub, they find a space to just relax and not think about anything for 15 minutes. And that 15 minutes can make their day easier”. As well as making the sure the rooms are fully stocked and compliant with social-distancing guidelines, hub managers also have training in mental health. If a member of staff is in crisis, they can offer immediate assistance and refer them to the hub psychologist.

Communication and connection



Necessary social distancing keeps us at arm's length from one another, making communication and connection harder than ever. This limited interaction has serious implications in a hospital setting. It is hard to comfort someone without a friendly touch or smile, wards are unbearably empty of family and friends, and restrictive PPE hinders collaboration and communication. We knew that a vital component of the Hospital Heroes Appeal was to try and restore this much-needed human touch.

Thanks to our Hospital Heroes Appeal, we were able to provide 34 electronic tablets, which helped patients see and speak to their loved ones. It was essential that staff were able to make video calls quickly and easily, without using their own personal details and while still protecting the privacy of the patient and their family. The specialised software we purchased enables the tablets to be used without an individual login process and, most importantly, safeguards all personal details. Neil, who was redeployed from the eye department to adult intensive care at the height of the first wave, says, "The tablets have been amazing. Family and friends really appreciate the opportunity to see their loved ones". Many patients are too unwell to communicate, so the tablets have been a vital tool for sharing medical updates with family members. The calls can sometimes be very upsetting for the patient and their family, but someone like Neil is always on hand to comfort and guide them through the process.

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In an ideal world, a patient's family would be by their side, but it will be a long time before families can visit again. For now, the tablets have made a huge, huge difference.”

Neil

To further facilitate communication, we purchased two-way baby monitors to help staff working alone interact with their colleagues. Laura, who had been redeployed to a paediatric COVID ward, says, "I can imagine how daunting it must have been to work alone without any immediate support, especially for nurses who were probably quite junior and hadn't been in that situation before. The baby monitors are a lifeline". Mini whiteboards and pens have also proved invaluable. If a patient is ventilated and unable to speak, the whiteboard helps them communicate. For staff, heavy PPE makes it difficult to talk or be heard, "You find yourself shouting and are constantly repeating yourself. That is why the whiteboards are so helpful. We also write little messages to cheer each other up, which is quite sweet". We also provided instant cameras so that staff can take a photo of themselves before they have to cover their faces with PPE. These photos are then made into ID badges, which means an anxious patient will still be able to see the friendly face behind the mask.



King's Volunteers helped put batteries in radios before delivering them to patients on the wards

Vital support services

Life after being discharged from an intensive care unit can be complex and challenging. Dr Tom Best, clinical director of critical care at King's, says problems such as memory loss, prolonged anxiety, depression, weight loss, chronic pain or nerve damage can hinder a patient's recovery. But, he says, "The good news is that with time and the right care, most of these problems are reversible. And every day we are learning more and more how to minimise and prevent these problems, if we apply the highest-quality care". Thanks to the Hospital Heroes Appeal, we have been able to fund a multidisciplinary team who will provide expert care and treatment for patients leaving intensive care. Once in place, the team will be fully funded for a year and will comprise a psychiatrist, two psychologists, a social worker and a support worker dedicated to the rehabilitation of these particularly vulnerable patients.

End-of-life care and bereavement support have also become key priorities. The appeal has enabled family liaison workers to be put in place to support those whose loved ones are unwell or have died. Sadly, the pandemic has made it even more distressing to have a loved one in hospital at the end of their life. Under strict COVID visitation rules, just one person is allowed to visit an end-of-life patient in intensive care. It can be devastating for families to be physically apart in their final moments. To help ease some of the anguish, family and friends can at least use the electronic tablets to see their loved one and say goodbye when they cannot be there in person. And, of course, our kind and dedicated staff do everything they can to make sure the patient and their families are cared for with the utmost compassion. Douglas, a critical care nurse, says, "Even in death, I see it as a privilege to be there because it's their last moment".

With these bereaved families in mind, we have developed a system that offers support and solace for everyone who has lost a loved one at King's during the pandemic. Condolence materials and cards are made available to sensitively communicate with families. We also provide special packaging for a loved one's possessions to be returned, ensuring families receive cherished belongings in a way that dignifies and respects the life that has been lost.

We had many concerns about the vulnerabilities facing friends and families who were unable to visit their loved one in hospital, be with them when they died or observe traditional rituals around their death. David, head of social work at King's College Hospital, understood that the way in which they offered bereavement support had to be reassessed, "Around ten per cent of those affected by grief require additional support – this could be due to issues such as social isolation or a very unexpected death".

We have been able to fund the King's College Hospital Charity Bereavement Service. Thanks to the appeal and grants received from NHS Charities Together, we have commissioned St Christopher's Hospice to provide tailored bereavement support for those who were a friend, partner or relative of someone who died in our hospitals during the COVID-19 pandemic. This personalised and free service is open to both adults and children and has also been extended to support members of staff who have lost a loved one during the pandemic. Thanks to our funding, qualified counsellors have been able to provide much-needed therapeutic information, advice and support. Since September 2020, over 100 referrals have been received and 300 counselling sessions have been completed.

“

I was so grateful for the support I received after my Papa's sudden death. A social worker helped me find the closure and support I needed, and I am now receiving bereavement counselling. I feel heard and understood, and most importantly I have finally found a conduit to express my grief and manage the trauma associated with my Papa's death. I hope this service continues for others – you've made me and my family feel important and part of a caring society.”

Boosting morale

With very restricted visiting regulations in place across COVID and non-COVID wards, patients were struggling without their family and friends. Much-needed toiletries and beauty products lifted their spirits and 40 aromatherapy diffusers placed on the wards helped create a feeling of calm. To help alleviate boredom and keep loneliness at bay, we distributed hundreds of activity bags that included mindfulness colouring books, pens and puzzles. In addition, 30 DVD players, 250 DVDs, headphones and 100 radios kept patients connected to the outside world and greatly improved their emotional wellbeing.

Many of our supporters have a personal connection to one of our hospitals. For some, it is near to where they live or work, for others, it is where a life was saved, changed or lost. All wanted to voice their heartfelt thanks to the incredible staff who work so selflessly to help others. Hundreds took the time to write inspiring and uplifting messages to share with the Charity's front-line colleagues. To help boost morale and raise spirits, we commissioned posters and wall art featuring these wonderful expressions of support. Now, hospital staff can read their inspirational words while they are at work. Louise, from the infant feeding team at the Princess Royal University Hospital, says, "I saw one of these posters on my night shift. It was so lovely and most definitely gave me a boost before my shift".

With every available hand needed, we were so proud to support the induction of 150 newly qualified nurses to the King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. These nurses worked incredibly hard to complete their studies early and go straight to work on the front line. To welcome the newest additions to the King's team, we presented them with welcome packs and funded copies of the latest nursing handbooks and workbooks to help support their development. Tosan, matron for pre-registration education, says, "The students were all very excited to receive the book in their goody bags. It is a tool to be carried throughout their careers".



“
I got a linen laundry bag out of a box earlier and it had a little tag on it that said, “*Made with love for the NHS, thank you so much for everything you are doing*” and it took my breath away. You just don't realise the number of people who are at home doing things to help us.”

Laura

A marathon, not a sprint

Thanks to the Hospital Heroes Appeal, our initiative to provide immediate practical and emotional assistance is well underway. However, there is no doubt that the second wave, alongside the usual winter pressures of flu and norovirus, will take a further toll on already exhausted front-line staff. As well as providing them with additional support, we hope to expand the wellbeing hubs to permanent larger sites in order to benefit greater numbers.

We can also see the devastating impact that long COVID has on some patients. With many experiencing persistent debilitating symptoms, more must be done

to assist their rehabilitation and recovery. A COVID-19 support group is being established to enable survivors to share their experiences, receive support and seek the help of specialised healthcare professionals.

As always, we will respond to the needs of staff and patients as they arise – we are determined to support our hospitals through the pandemic and beyond. By raising money for cutting-edge equipment and facilities, innovative research and pioneering treatment, and by improving the working environment for staff, we strive to make a difference to the lives of patients and their loved ones at our hospitals.



“

The doctors, nurses, cleaners, catering staff, porters, support staff and specialists who looked after me during the COVID-19 lockdown were truly amazing. I will always remember their commitment, sacrifice and their positive attitude. It is this dedication that truly brought home to me what heroes the NHS team really are and it's why I chose to support their charity.”

If you would like to know more

To find out more about our work
or to support our NHS staff and patients
at a time when it is needed the most, please
get in touch with us:

Donate

supportkings.org.uk/donate

Email

info@supportkings.org.uk

Call

020 4526 8050

Write

King's College Hospital Charity,
PO Box 74160, London SE5 5JU

Connect

@supportkings on Twitter,
Facebook and Instagram

To find out more about our bereavement service, please
ring our free and confidential helpline on **020 8768 4599**
or email stc.kchcbereavement@nhs.net.

supportkings.org.uk/bereavement

THANK YOU



“

When people talk about heroes of the pandemic, the face of the NHS will be what people see.”