

# INSIDE King's

SPRING ISSUE 2025

## Special delivery

The privilege of helping mothers  
and babies

# Welcome



**Welcome to the seventh issue of Inside King's, I hope you enjoy reading this edition.**

Despite challenging times for King's and the wider NHS, we continue to see examples of excellence and innovation in our hospitals, and our teams and individual staff members continue to be recognised both nationally and internationally for their achievements. Inside this

issue you will find some of these good news stories from around the Trust.

In the Quick Reads section there is a rundown of the latest news from across King's, including pioneering work involving deep brain stimulation in the treatment of addiction, a study led by Professor Keyoumars Ashkan. Professor Ashkan was also recently awarded an MBE on the New Year Honours list.

On page 8 you can read about Rowland Gardner who has spent an astonishing 52 years working in the NHS, with most of this time spent at Queen Mary's Hospital, Sidcup. After all this time he says there is nothing he would rather be doing, and I am extremely proud of colleagues such as Rowland who dedicate their entire career to the NHS.

In this issue, you can also read about the work of our neuro-oncology department, which is one of the largest of its kind in the UK. They treat hundreds of patients with brain and spinal cancers each year, including Alex Savage, a young man suffering from brain cancer who came to King's for treatment. Turn to page 10 to read our interview with Alex and members of our neuro-oncology nursing team.

Finally, on page 14, you can learn more about the work of King's College Hospital Charity, which has completed several projects to make young people feel more welcome and engaged during their treatment with us.

Thank you for your continued support.

**Clive Kay**  
Chief Executive

INSIDE  
**King's**

#### Meet the team

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Design: [www.mikelebianstudio.com](http://www.mikelebianstudio.com)

Front cover: Dr Marilyn Lowings





## Staying up to date

As well as reading Inside King's, you can stay up to date about what's happening at the Trust via social media, and our website.



@KingsCollegeNHS.bsky.social



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www.kch.nhs.uk

If you have any comments or feedback on this magazine then please contact:



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# Contents

04

## QUICK READS

The latest news and events from our hospitals

06

## MEET THE TEAM

We talk to neurological specialists at Orpington Hospital

07

## ABOVE AND BEYOND

Nurses raise thousands after setting up charity

08

## LIFETIME OF SERVICE

Rowland Gardner celebrates 52 years working in the NHS

09

## MULTI-ORGAN TRANSPLANT SUCCESS

Young King's patient Oscar in recovery after significant operation

10

## SEALED WITH A CNS

An in-depth look at our Neuro-oncology service

12

## THE HAPPIEST DAY

Dr Marilyn Lowings talks about helping expectant mums

14

## BRINGING CALM AND JOY

Our hospitals become more welcoming to young patients

# King's to trial brain implants to treat alcohol and opioid addiction



**Above:** Professor Keyoumars Ashkan

**P**eople suffering from severe alcohol and opioid addiction will be offered a revolutionary new technique involving planting electrodes in the brain to modulate brain activity and cravings, and improve self-control.

Deep brain stimulation (DBS) is to be trialled at King's College Hospital and individuals are currently being recruited to take part.

DBS is a neurosurgical treatment that involves implanting an electrode in the brain and a pacemaker under general anaesthesia. These electrodes

deliver electrical impulses to modulate neural activity, which can help alleviate symptoms of various neurological and psychiatric disorders.

Keyoumars Ashkan, Professor of Neurosurgery at King's and the lead surgeon for the study, said: *"It will be a major leap forward if we can show efficacy in this very difficult disease with huge burden to the patients and society."*

Prof Ashkan was made an MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) for services to neurosurgery in the 2025 New Year Honours List.

## King's celebrates HSJ Digital Awards shortlisting

**K**ing's has been shortlisted in the 'Optimising Clinical Pathways through Digital' category at this year's awards, following the Trust's efforts to develop the Kidney Beam app.

Kidney Beam is the world's first clinically-proven kidney-specific rehabilitation app, which helps people with chronic kidney disease to become more physically active and improve their health.

Professor Sharlene Greenwood, Consultant Physiotherapist at



**Above:** The Kidney Beam app

Kidney Rehab Team, spearheaded the development of the app with co-founder Katie Bell during the Covid-19 pandemic, when vulnerable kidney patients were at high risk of being impacted by lack of exercise.

Prof Greenwood said: *"We've built the app with expert input from across the entire kidney care spectrum including the brilliant physiotherapists from the King's kidney rehab team, who lead our online exercise and lifestyle classes in a way that is specially tailored for people living with kidney disease".*

## Colleagues represent King's at COVID-19 Day of Reflection parliamentary reception

**D**r Felicia Kwaku OBE and a team of nurses from King's recently attended a parliamentary reception at the House of Lords to mark the COVID-19 Day of Reflection.

Hosted by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) on Tuesday 18 March, the event brought together bereaved families, NHS Charities Together, and social action organisations to reflect on how communities across the country commemorated the Day of Reflection.

Also present at the event was King's Matron Richard Frempong who became very seriously ill during the first wave of COVID-19 and spent time in King's Intensive Care Unit (ITU).

*"It was a privilege to attend the*



**Above:** The King's team at the House of Lords

*reception remembering those who died, alongside the public, parliamentarians, and professionals,"* said Felicia.

2025 marked five years since the start of the pandemic, and the Day of Reflection is held every year as way for us all to remember those we lost, as well as to pay tribute to everyone who worked so hard to care for those in need.

## Lambeth GP Food Co-op celebrates anniversary

**T**he Lambeth GP Food Co-op recently celebrated its twelfth anniversary at King's College Hospital.

The Lambeth GP Food Co-op, which manages a vegetable garden at King's, was set up in 2013 by local NHS doctors and nurses, and received funding from Lambeth Council and the local NHS.

The garden at King's, which opened in 2016, is designed to support local patients with long-term health



**Above:** Lambeth GP Food Co-op event 2025

conditions, by teaching them how to grow food and, by doing so, improve their health and wellbeing.

## Trust launches new Nutrition and Hydration strategy



**K**ing's has launched a new Nutrition and Hydration strategy which outlines our vision to provide high-quality, sustainable, nutritious food and drink to all patients, staff and visitors.

Good, nutritious food and drink is vital for patients during their hospital stay, and research shows that a healthy diet can improve patient's health and wellbeing, as well as their recovery from illness or surgery.

The new Nutrition and Hydration strategy is informed by feedback from patients and staff, and also incorporates findings from the annual national Adult Inpatient Survey, which includes five specific questions on nutrition and hydration.

The strategy is available to view on our website

[www.kch.nhs.uk/about/corporate-information/our-standards-of-care/nutrition-and-hydration-strategy/](https://www.kch.nhs.uk/about/corporate-information/our-standards-of-care/nutrition-and-hydration-strategy/)

# Meet the Ontario ward team

A team of specialists at Orpington Hospital are supporting patients who are recovering from a range of neurological conditions.



**Above:** The Ontario ward team

**S**taff working on Ontario Ward help patients who face challenges in their daily lives due to neurological conditions or injuries requiring rehabilitation. Cheryl Ngujo is a Ward Sister and has worked on Ontario ward for nine years.

She explained: "We care and help patients with disabilities following a stroke, brain injury or spinal injury and we aim to help them regain as much independence as possible.

"Everyone on the ward has an important part to play in maximising a patient's recovery, and each staff member has a wealth of expertise in rehabilitation. We all have different strengths, but to work on Ontario ward you need full dedication

to your job, you need to be compassionate, empathetic, caring, and a good listener."

Jaisy Thomas, also a Ward Sister on Ontario ward, explained that seeing a patient recover was one of the best parts of her job: "I am excited and feel gratified when patients who were admitted to the ward with multiple disabilities go on to make incredible recoveries. It is a privilege to be there when a patient who came to us in a wheelchair walks out of the door. Supporting a patient as they regain independence and return to their community is one of the most satisfying and rewarding aspects of rehabilitation nursing."

Sukhdeep Kaur, a nurse on Ontario ward, said: "As a nurse,

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*"Ontario ward is such an incredible environment to work in, and it's truly a privilege to work alongside these brilliant nurses."*

**Ishmael Dawuty**

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one of the most rewarding moments is when the patients are coming to visit us in the ward with full confidence, and showing us how they can now walk without any assistance. Seeing them happy and confident makes our heart bigger and gives us more inspiration and motivation to work harder in our career."

Ishmael Dawuty, Lead Nurse for Stroke, Neurology and Neuro-Rehabilitation at King's, added: "Ontario ward is such an incredible environment to work in, and it's truly a privilege to work alongside these brilliant nurses. They go above and beyond to help make sure their patients have the best possible chance of recovery and independence."



# Nurse specialists breath life into charity project

Nurses at the Princess Royal University Hospital (PRUH) have helped to raise tens of thousands of pounds to aid early cancer diagnosis of lung cancer.

**N**icky de Lobel, a Lung Cancer Clinical Nurse Specialist working in the Chartwell Unit at the PRUH, initially set up Everybreath with a patient and her husband as a support group where patients could share their stories, discuss coping strategies, and offer each other emotional encouragement. It is now supported by three lung nurses, including Mandy Cowburn and Anna Wooder.



**Above:** Nicky de Lobel, Mandy Cowburn and Anna Wooder

It has since grown into an award-winning registered charity which has raised more than £70,000 to aid early diagnostics for lung cancer, with people from all across London attending their monthly meetings.

Nicky said: *"In 2019 I ran a stand for Lung Cancer Awareness Month and invited patients and their families along to share their stories and spread the message that lung cancer can affect anyone, not just smokers."*

*"It had overwhelming support which led me to realise the need for a local support group where people could meet in a safe space and share their experiences."*

Everybreath has since gone from strength to strength, becoming a

registered charity in 2022 and being the nominated charity for the Mayor of Bromley the following year. Nicky was nominated for Cancer Nurse of the Year in 2023, reaching the Nursing Times final, and both her and a patient's husband were awarded a medal for voluntary services to Bromley.

The charity's schedule is now packed with fundraising balls, concerts, quiz nights, health awareness stands, Christmas remembrance services, sponsored walks and challenges.

*"Everybreath has been running for five years now and we have held over 40 meetings to support patients and their families,"* said Nicky.

*"I've seen first-hand how powerful peer support can be, alongside*

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*"It had overwhelming support which led me to realise the need for a local support group where people could meet in a safe space and share their experiences."*

**Nicky de Lobel**

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*medical interventions. It's truly transformative. My goal is to provide a comprehensive approach to lung cancer care that addresses both the physical and emotional aspects of the disease. I believe this holistic approach can significantly enhance the quality of life for my patients."*

# "After 52 years in the NHS, there's nothing else I'd rather be doing"

**R**owland Gardner is the Head of the Dental & Maxillofacial Technical Service at the Gillies Unit, Queen Mary's Hospital, Sidcup. He started in the NHS an incredible 52 years ago, with much of that time spent at Queen Mary's.

Rowland started out as a Trainee Dental Technician in 1972 making dental devices, dentures, orthodontic braces, crowns and bridges and facial prostheses. These improved patients' appearance, speech and ability to eat.

*"King's is very much part of my family history," he said.*

*"Hospital based training in Dental Technology had recently been launched when I started out. I was lucky to be taught by some pioneers of dentistry such as Professor Ken Liddelow, and positive influences of 'giving service' have always remained.*

*"My brother was working at Queen Mary's and told me about a vacancy. I came here at just 19 and set up a multidisciplinary laboratory. Queen Mary's was then a trauma centre, it even had a helipad!"*

Rowland qualified as a post graduate tutor, training the hospital based technicians of today across



**Above:** Rowland receiving his diploma



**Above:** Rowland in the lab in 1977

the NHS. He has always enjoyed the community at Queen Mary's, returning as Department and Service Manager. At a time of organisational change the department grew from

just five dental chairs to ten as five other local services were absorbed.

Rowland's team developed innovative laboratory techniques, won a national award and was soon completing 100 facial surgeries a year, which he calls a proud achievement. *"I am proud of the contribution I made to ensure the change from Dental Surgery Assistant to Dental Nurse was fully recognised"* he said.

*"I'm also proud of the opportunities, teaching and mentoring I delivered, seeing many past students thriving in our special profession. I took on a student for work experience in 1984, we still work together all these years later. He is a fantastic colleague and I'm lucky to work with him."*

Rowland now works part time, but has no plans to retire: *"As long as I've got energy and I still enjoy it, there's nothing I would be rather doing."*

*"I still see patients as part of my clinical duties, and seeing them smile is the best part of the job. It brings a tear to my eye when patients get out of the dentist's chair and say how thankful they are – in our role we literally 'make' smiles, and it is a privilege to be part of the team that helps them."*



# Nine-year-old Oscar celebrates transplant anniversary after “gift of life”

Three years after a small intestine, liver and colon transplant at King's, Oscar Cromwell is back at home with his family in Cambridge



**Above:** Young patient Oscar during his stay in King's

Oscar is now recovering well after undergoing a life-saving triple organ transplant. The nine-year-old was born with gastroschisis, a rare condition which happens during pregnancy and causes the intestines to develop outside the stomach. Oscar spent the first year of his life in hospital undergoing continuous treatment, but as time went on his liver began to deteriorate.

Oscar's mother, Sinead Cafferkey, explained: “Oscar went through so much when he was a tiny baby. He needed surgery on his bowel when he was just a few months old, and

*as time went on, we knew that his best chance of life would be a small intestine, liver and colon transplant.”*

Oscar was three years old when he joined the waiting list for a multi-organ transplant, and three years later in 2021, his family received a call to say that the moment for his surgery at King's had come.

Sinead explained: “We knew that this could be a lifeline for Oscar, and after years of waiting, we had a call in the night asking us to come to King's. We will be forever grateful to the family who made the incredible decision to give Oscar the gift of life. He would not be here now without them.”

Oscar is now back at home with his family, and recently celebrated the third anniversary of his transplant.

Carly Bambridge, Clinical Nurse Specialist at King's, who has supported Oscar and his family, said: “We couldn't be happier with the progress Oscar has made and we are thrilled to hear that he's enjoying going to school and playing with his friends.

*“Oscar will continue to need monitoring and support over the*

*“We knew that this could be a lifeline for Oscar, and after years of waiting, we had a call in the middle of the night asking us to come to King's for his transplant.”*

**Sinead Cafferkey**

*coming months and years, but so far he is going from strength to strength.”*



**Above:** Oscar having made a good recovery

# Inside the brain-cancer service

King's is home to one of the largest neuro-oncology services in the UK, treating hundreds of people diagnosed with brain and spinal tumours each year.

King's is home to one of the largest neuro-oncology services in the UK, treating hundreds of people diagnosed with brain and spinal tumours each year.

When a patient is referred to King's, the team will utilise a range of innovative and personalised treatments to help them learn to live with the condition. Patients benefit from the support of a team of experienced and specialist neuro-oncology nurses.

One of the team's specialist areas of expertise is caring for patients with low-grade gliomas, which are tumours that develop over time in the brain. These tumours can cause seizures and headaches, as well as create difficulties in carrying out normal day-to-day tasks such as writing or concentrating at work.

Parents initial contact will be via the low grade glioma Neuro-oncology clinical nurse specialist (CNS) Charlotte Robinson. Charlotte will explain the findings of their scan, check their understanding and explain the next steps in their care. She will also get an understanding of



**Above:** Neuro-oncology CNS team

any financial, social or psychological concerns that could get in the way of them having a good quality of life.

Charlotte's post was the first of its kind in the UK created following investment from the Brain Tumour Charity, who recognised the complexity of this patient group and their unique needs.

Charlotte told us more about the unique pathways for patients with a low-grade glioma: *"The patients are typically of working age, with a career or a young family, so this condition can have a huge*

*impact. Our team offers a holistic approach, ensuring that treatment is individualised to best meet their specific needs."*

The team use a treatment called Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation, which stimulates nerve cells in the brain. This will reveal what functions will be affected by operating on the tumour, and can help patients make an informed decision about their treatment options.

*"We always want to make the right decision for the patient, and knowing the full extent of how operating will*

impact their lives is so important”, says Charlotte. “We aim to provide holistic support, so not just physical health but also mental health.” The lead oncology psychologist and neuro-psychologist have pioneered the use of psychology education workshops which see patients with brain tumours and their families, get together to explore some of the feelings they may have been experiencing since diagnosis.

Alex Savage was diagnosed with a glioma in 2021 and is under the care of King’s. He told us more about his story: “I was living in Australia, and I woke up from a nap with the smell of burning rubber in my nostrils – my first thought was my wife had left her straighteners on. The smell kept recurring and I had to see a variety of specialists to find out why.

*“An MRI revealed I had a brain tumour and I was scheduled in for surgery just ten days later. When I woke up they explained to me that about an eighth of my brain had been removed.”*

Alex returned to the UK to finish his treatment, and was then referred to King’s: “I am lucky as I’ve responded well to the chemo, I have been able to keep working and exercising throughout. But the support that I have had from the team at King’s has been really helpful. I took part in an occupational therapy session, and attended a psychologist-led workshop where patients shared



**Above:** Patient Alex Savage

experiences, and practical tips for things that you might not even consider, such as where to get travel insurance.”

For Alex, the responsiveness and care shown by the team has always been exceptional: “Over the years I’ve built a great relationship with Ellie Kostick (Alex’s Cancer CNS). If I get some information about a scan that I don’t understand, I know I can contact her and she will get back to me quickly.

*“The biggest thing is knowing that they are always there for me. They are always so helpful, dealing with any number of questions I might have. For instance a recent scan showed a spot on my brain, and after a chat with a consultant I still had some concerns. I emailed Ellie and later that day we were talking and she gave me the reassurance I needed.”*

*“An MRI revealed I had a brain tumour and I was scheduled in for surgery just ten days later. When I woke up they explained to me that about an eighth of my brain had been removed”*

**Alex Savage**

Our King’s nursing team, like Alex, are passionate about raising awareness of the condition. They regularly interview patients and loved ones to share their experiences on their YouTube channel, while Alex lends his support to brain cancer charities whenever he can.

Alex told us: “Brain cancer is the biggest cancer killer of children and adults under-40 in the UK, and it doesn’t get the same amount of funding as other cancers. I hope this changes in the future, but for now it’s important to raise awareness and support the likes of the Tessa Jowell Foundation, who already do such great work with King’s.”

Search for ‘Sealed with a CNS’ on YouTube to learn more about the work of our neuro-oncology nursing team.



# Helping deliver babies safely

**A**naesthetics is the biggest medical specialty at King's and round 60% of all patients will have an interaction with an anaesthetist while in hospital.

Dr Marilyn Lowings is one of 11 specialist Consultant Obstetric Anaesthetists working at the Trust. More than 4,000 babies are born in our hospitals every year, and Marilyn and our anaesthetic teams help mothers by providing pain relief, as well as caesarean sections and emergency deliveries.

*"I've always liked working at King's because it feels like a family here," said Marilyn.*

*"It feels like everyone here wants to just do the best for the patient in sometimes challenging circumstances. The patient is always the priority and there's some wonderful people I work with who really care so much."*

Marilyn has been a consultant at King's College Hospital for around ten years, having started as a trainee at the hospital. She also gave birth to her own daughter at King's.

*"I started in anaesthetics about 20*



**Above:** Dr Marilyn Lowings, Consultant Obstetric Anaesthetist

*years ago; it was one of the first attachments I did as a medical student and I really enjoyed it," she said.*

*"I like anaesthetics because you look after one person at a time so you can make sure that everything is as perfect as it can be for that patient. We also manage critical illness and*

*part of our training involves intensive care such as putting people on ventilators. We can also give drugs that control blood pressure in a way that other doctors don't."*

Compared to 20 years ago, Marilyn said there was now an increasing amount of women with more complex medical problems during



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*“I started in anaesthetics about 20 years ago; it was one of the first attachments I did as a medical student and I really enjoyed it.”*

***Dr Marilyn Lowings***

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*with the most planned scenarios, things can change from minute to minute.*

*“I think the cases I find the most rewarding are helping women who develop something called placenta accreta, which is a serious pregnancy condition that occurs when the placenta grows too deeply into the uterine wall. These women need specialist support.*

*“We also know that women from ethnic minorities have much worse outcome in pregnancies and I feel like that’s something we do try and address at King’s.*

*“We try and give a parity of care to all these women and make everyone’s birth as special as we can. It’s great seeing how happy couples are when their baby is born, especially if they’ve been scared or frightened in the lead up to the birth or if they’ve had a bad outcome in the past.*

*“When women that have been trying for a very long time to have a baby are successful that is also very special. It’s really rewarding when they come back to see us a few months later all well, with their babies.”*

Marilyn said: *“I think I’m in a very privileged position because on labour ward, you get to be part of the birth of someone’s baby, which is always a very special occasion.*

*“If we can offer them decent pain relief, then suddenly they can feel much more in control of the situation and in control of their own bodies.*

*“Some women are very scared or have had previous bad experiences, so it’s really rewarding to be there and to be able to support them through what can be a very emotionally challenging time, and be there for a very happy occasion.”*

pregnancies as well as a larger percentage of older women giving birth.

*“With higher risk births we develop a very clear plan that is agreed with the patient,”* said Marilyn.

*“It should all be straight-forward but childbirth is unpredictable and even*

# Bringing calm and joy to the children of King's

For children and their families who spend time at our hospitals, King's College Hospital Charity has funded several projects to bring them calmness, safety and even joy.

## A fun new interactive artwork for SEND children

Providing sensory stimulation as well as uplifting and joyful experiences to children with special educational needs and physical disabilities (SEND), King's recently installed an interactive 'Enchanted Forest' artwork in its paediatric department.

Brought together in partnership with arts organisation Art Explora UK and non-profit It Is Now, the Enchanted Forest gives children, both inpatients and outpatients, an interactive screen-based experience set within an immersive magical forest landscape.

Sarah Harris, Head of Nursing for Child Health, said: *"Sensory play is important for all children, but for those with additional needs the stimulation can be of particular benefit."*

*"We look forward to our young patients interacting with the artwork and taking pleasure from it during their time with us."*



**Above:** Dental sensory room

Iona Joy, Director of Grants and Insight, King's College Hospital Charity, added: *"As a charity, prioritising inclusive and accessible care is at the heart of what we do. We are delighted to support this piece of interactive artwork."*

## A comforting space for parents with sick children

Receiving bad news about your child's health can be the most horrible thing a parent can imagine.

For parents with children in hospital for a few days or weeks, or for parents of children who are with us longer term, a private space in which news like this could be broken was desperately needed.

Thanks to the generosity of grateful parents whose children spent time on the ward, the newly refurbished Quiet Room on the Princess Elizabeth and Lion Children's Ward at King's College Hospital has been



transformed into a serene and calming haven for families in their most challenging times.

Here, clinicians and parents can discuss their child's care away from the ward environment.

Families selected soft, muted colours to go with the furnishings and gentle dimmable lighting was used so families can sit in the room in gentle lighting long after the clinical conversation is over.

Families and staff spoke of the importance of touch and parents being able to hold each other, so a small sofa was purchased instead of individual chairs to allow parents and families to sit and hold one another.

Kevin Farrell, Paediatric Matron told us: *"This room is of such benefit. It has made a huge difference to staff, patients and their families."*

### **A quiet and calming space for children visiting the dentist**

For children with learning disabilities, autism and ADHD, visiting the dentist can be highly stressful.

The newly opened Paediatric Dentistry Sensory Room at King's College Dental Institute, provides a safe de-escalation space for children to calm down away from the noise of the waiting room.



**Above:** A young patient exploring the Enchanted Forest

The room also provides a much-needed space for clinically vulnerable and immunosuppressed children to wait away from other children and reduce the risk of unnecessary contact.

Paige Holdaway, Practice Development Coordinator for the Paediatric Dentistry Department said: *"We see in excess of 12,500 outpatients annually, 65% of which have additional needs or medical complexities."*

*"Making our patients feel safe and building trust is fundamental in their development as they will have to visit the dentist for many years. Having a space that*

*isn't overwhelming with medical equipment will be a great tool to acclimatise children to accessing care, and also offers an area for patients to calm down if they become angry and lose control of their emotions."*

Our supporters generously funded this project through our Crown Fund, which enables King's staff to apply for grants in their department.

King's College Hospital Charity is dedicated to helping King's to go above and beyond what the NHS can provide. But none of this is possible without the generosity of supporters.

To find out more and to show your support visit their website at

 [www.supportkings.org.uk](http://www.supportkings.org.uk)

**“Without King’s, I  
wouldn’t be here”**



**Donate today to support life-changing  
care for more people like Olivia**

