

# Team effort brightens day centre

**Staff based at the Mental Health Research Network's regional office in Nottingham picked up their paintbrushes and transformed a 'friendship room' used by older people at a day centre in the city.**

The task was a team-building exercise for staff at the East Midlands plus South Yorkshire Hub who work in Nottingham – including clinical studies officers who help research teams recruit participants via mental health services run by Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust.

Their voluntary efforts boosted morale of both staff and service users at the centre. 'Along with other organisations, we have been tightening our belts and facing a drop in income,' said Jill Davies from Radford Care

Group, the charity that runs the centre. 'As a result, the friendship room has been neglected. It is meant to be a bright, cheerful and happy place to be, and when the paint starts to peel away, it has an effect on people's well-being.'

At least 25 older people use the room each day to meet, take part in activities and eat together. In total, about 100 people are part of the 'friendship group' which is supported substantially by volunteers and fund-raising efforts. Members of the group are collected and taken home, and

outings and entertainment are also organised. 'The social contact is very important,' says Jill. 'Loneliness is one of the biggest, hidden killers.'

In addition, the Radford Care Group runs services for older people with dementia: on the decorating day, the Mental Health Research Network (MHRN) team met with some of the people who are supported by these services.

MHRN East Midlands plus South Yorkshire Hub manager Ann Priddey said the team-building exercise was





an opportunity for staff to get know each other. 'Our clinical studies officers are out and about recruiting participants to research studies. Other members of the team are out speaking to service users about getting involved in research, so people are rarely at their desks. Our work is very collaborative, so having the opportunity to work together in this way helps build relationships. We were all delighted to be able to make a difference to a service that can help prevent mental health problems developing.'

Jill Davies says the activities organised for the friendship group are all geared to keeping people's minds active and include gentle exercise. The charity, set up four decades ago, also runs a group for

The MHRN team. 'The day was hard work but fun,' says Sandra Simpson (pictured left).

carers and a Mental Capacity Act forum for professionals. 'We have an online forum where people can discuss different aspects of the Act, and we also organise meetings with relevant speakers and a discussion.'

Sandra Simpson is the clinical studies officer who organised the event. 'The centre has a lovely positive feel with enthusiastic staff,' she said. 'Our team members took their own

brushes and rollers and we used colours that were chosen by members of the friendship group. The day was hard work but fun and went really smoothly. Everyone in the team pulled together to ensure that we finished the task in the one day allocated to us and we left the friendship room looking brighter, fresher and more welcoming.'

■ East Midlands plus South Yorkshire Hub also has teams of clinical studies officers based – and supporting research – in Derbyshire, Lincolnshire and Sheffield. The Nottingham team is based within the Institute of Mental Health, set up as a partnership between the University of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust.



The Mental Health Research Network is part of the National Institute for Health Research and supports studies in England.



Published by the NIHR Mental Health Research Network  
 April 2011  
 NIHR MHRN Coordinating Centre  
 Institute of Psychiatry, PO77  
 De Crespigny Park, London SE5 8AF  
 www.mhrn.info

Institute of Psychiatry