

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **LPT volunteers give patients' garden a 'WeCitizen' makeover**



A team of 'back office' staff from Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust swapped their spreadsheets for spades - to give an overgrown hospital garden a 'Ground Force' style makeover.

The team of 30 colleagues from the Trust's finance, business and estates services spent a day transforming a courtyard garden at Stewart House, LPT's adult mental health rehabilitation inpatient unit in Narborough.

The aim was to revitalise the tired-looking garden so that patients and staff could make the most of the landscaped outdoor space for relaxation and therapy activities.

Over the course of five hours the teams cleared the area of overgrown bushes, weeds and debris – filling two large skips - and replanted it with winter and spring plants and bulbs donated by the volunteers themselves and by Linnaeus Nursery, a community garden centre run by the Trust for service users.

Stewart House matron, Helen Vignali commented: "The garden has been in need of attention for a while. We are so grateful for everyone for working so hard to make the place safer and more of an asset for the patients. It will make our lives easier, it looks amazing, I can actually see to the other side of the courtyard."

The project was a test run for a new corporate social responsibility programme in LPT, called WeCitizen which will encourage staff to use their skills and interests to

support local community projects and organisations. The initiative is being launched in April and will be open to all of the Trust's 5,500 employees.

Rob Melling, LPT's head of community development. explained: ""We know doing good makes you feel good – and we believe this is a great way to connect different parts of the organisation and for teams to get to know each others' interests and skills and our local communities.

"The WeCitizen initiative is a commitment by our Trust to provide communities across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland with the time, energy and skills of our staff to make a real difference. We wanted to trial it to see how it might work for a team and the staff who volunteered at Stewart House were absolutely amazing, we are very excited about the launch later this year.

"We had 42 people who volunteered on the day and those who couldn't be there made a personal donation towards the courtyard.

"The team cut down lots of bushes, and filled plant pots with flowers, litter picked, cleaned the paths, made new planting beds and decorated a Christmas tree. Others helped by making and delivering refreshments. Linnaeus Nursery donated hanging baskets and local businesses donated services."

LPT Trust secretary and corporate responsibility lead, Frank Lusk added: "It took less than five hours to transform the garden from a winter wilderness to a winter wonderland. I think everyone involved agreed it was a huge success.

"Many of our staff already give their time as volunteers outside work but this not only provides a formal offer for staff to volunteer in community-building in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, it's also about us investing in people as an organisation."

Organisations interested in finding more about the WeCitizen programme can email [communications@leicspart.nhs.uk](mailto:communications@leicspart.nhs.uk) or [neel.parmar@leicsparr.nhs.uk](mailto:neel.parmar@leicsparr.nhs.uk)

- Stewart House provides rehabilitation care for adults with mental health needs who have been unable to sustain living in a residential community due to the severity of their mental health needs.

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## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

1. Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust (LPT) provides community health, mental health and learning disabilities services for the one million people living in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. We have a budget in excess of £275 million and employ approximately 5,500 staff. For more information visit: [www.leicspart.nhs.uk](http://www.leicspart.nhs.uk).

2. Raising Health is our registered charity (number 1057361) which raises funds to support LPT's excellent care initiatives, equipment and innovations which go above and beyond core NHS provision, to enhance the experience of our patients, service users and staff. [www.raisinghealth.org.uk](http://www.raisinghealth.org.uk)

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