

NHS Lothian Charity Christmas Funding 2023

Thanks to funding from NHS Lothian Charity, 188 wards and departments across NHS Lothian provided some festive cheer for patients and families over Christmas and New Year. Approximately 10,000 patients and their families have benefitted from Christmas grant funding. This report illustrates how the funding was spent and the impact for patients, their families and NHS Lothian staff.



The staff have made such an effort, it's lovely. You almost forget you are in hospital at this time of year."

– Patient



How the funding was spent

In total, NHS Lothian Charity awarded £85,000 worth of grants. The average grant was £450 which was spent on;

- Decorations for wards, departments and patient areas
- Christmas trees for inside and outdoor spaces
- Food and non-alcoholic drinks for patients and their families to celebrate the Christmas period and New Year
- Gifts for patients to have in hospital or take home

This year gifts were the most popular item to spend the funds on, with 86% of staff reporting that they bought gifts for patients.



Purchasing gifts for the children is a tradition in our ward. Staff feel privileged that they are able to provide something to the children knowing it brings happiness to them and their families."

– Staff member, Calareidh Ward, Royal Hospital for Children and Young People

How the Christmas funding made a difference to patient wellbeing

The Christmas funding programme supported NHS Lothian Charity to meet a number of its strategic outcomes.

Improved patient health and wellbeing

83%

of staff agreed patients
were happier



A lot of our patients are of low mood, depression and anxiety, so the decorations really lift the mood of the patients, and you can see how happy they are.”

– Senior Charge Nurse, Pennylane ward, Midlothian Community Hospital



New or improved clinical practice

63%

of staff agreed patients were
more engaged with staff



Our ward has predominantly dementia patients and many of them forget its Christmas time, so the decorations help the patients remember and helps staff as they don't have to prompt them every day. The decorations really help us engage with patients.”

– Senior Charge Nurse, Roselane ward, Midlothian Community Hospital

How the Christmas funding made a difference to non clinical experiences

The Christmas funding programme supported NHS Lothian Charity to meet a number of its strategic outcomes.

Improved non clinical experience for patients and hospital visitors

83%

of staff agreed patients
had a better experience



The funding helps build rapport between patients and staff. It helps to create a festive environment that helps to de-stress patients, it makes them feel valued to receive a gift. Generally happier patients, which helps staff and **makes staff happier.**"

– Staff member, Royal Edinburgh Hospital

83%

of staff agreed patients felt
more valued



Patients commented to us how valued they felt at Christmas in hospital. We try our best to make it as happy and welcoming as possible at a difficult time for them."

– Staff member, Royal Infirmary Edinburgh

50%

of staff agreed the funding
directly or indirectly
enhanced families' and
carers' experience



Parents felt part of the team and felt welcomed to spend Christmas with their baby. We were able to provide memories for each family of baby's first Christmas."

– Staff member, Neonatal Unit, Royal Hospital for Children and Young People

How the Christmas funding made a difference to NHS Lothian staff

The Christmas funding programme supported NHS Lothian Charity to meet a number of its strategic outcomes.

Improved staff wellbeing

63%

of staff responding to the survey said their teams felt more valued and motivated



Purchasing gifts and preparing the Christmas party boosts staff morale in the ward. All of the team are encouraged to be involved and everyone's ideas and contributions are considered and appreciated which makes staff feel valued and motivates them."

– Staff member, Calareidh ward, Royal Hospital for Children and Young People

60%

of staff responding to the survey saw an improvement in the mental wellbeing of staff



As we purchased more decorations the mood of the staff was improved. They really felt happier and the patients loved the effort we put in on their behalf."

– Staff member, Outpatient Dialysis, Royal Infirmary Edinburgh

50%

of staff responding to the survey reported they were less stressed over this time



I started working for NHS Lothian during COVID so seeing the ward like this is just amazing. Hospitals can be cold, clinical places but the decorations cheer it up and make it feel a warmer and more comforting place to be as staff member and for patients. I don't find it quite as stressful at this time of year."

– Staff Nurse, Liberton Hospital, Edinburgh

Case study

Spending the festive period in hospital, Mary's story

"I had a fall in September and broke my ankle in 3 places, I was admitted to the Royal Infirmary Edinburgh then transferred to ward 3 in the East Lothian Community Hospital, which is closer to home. I thought and hoped I would have been home in time for Christmas but even with the help of my physiotherapist, I am just struggling to get properly back on my feet.

I have nothing but wonderful things to say about the staff normally, but they went above and beyond over the festive period. The ward was decorated beautifully, with a lovely tree in the dining room. In the run up to Christmas the staff got me involved in taking part in crafts, I made a paper-chain tree which I was proud of.

At Christmas I usually receive about 100 cards and they are displayed all around my house, my son was allowed to bring in about 30 of the cards and I had them displayed in my private room which was a much appreciated little comfort from home and was lovely to read all the messages in the cards from friends and family.

On Christmas morning Santa visited the ward (I was told after that Santa was one of the staff member's husbands, I thought it was very kind for him to give up his time on Christmas morning) and handed gifts out to all the patients. I was given a cosy blanket, toiletries, and chocolates. I was not expecting that!! All the staff were dressed up, it was a really wonderful atmosphere. Usually on Christmas day my son and his family come to my house, so it was a comfort they were able to visit and spend time with me on Christmas day in hospital. I was served a delicious Christmas dinner with lots of little extra treats.

I'll be honest I really didn't want to be in hospital over Christmas, it is a really hard time for me as I lost my husband 2 years ago and the loss is much more in focus at this time of year, but all the festive activities, decorations, gifts, food and wonderful staff helped make it a special time."



Spreading the festive cheer across NHS Lothian, a spotlight on....



Midlothian Community Hospital

Patients, families, staff and visitors can't help feeling festive with each ward taking part in the 'Festive Front Door' competition. One staff member commented: "it really got everyone in the hospital talking and a real buzz about the place, it was also a good opportunity to get the patients involved in helping make the decorations." The winning door was Loanesk ward with their polar express theme. One staff member from the ward shared: "we have been busy preparing since July, the train took a long time to create but we were very happy to win the competition." A Pharmacist from Glenlee ward praised the staff's effort and team work: "they have done an epic job, a lot is done by the night shift staff and some staff stay on late or come in when not working to put up decorations."



It is not just a one day event, many wards plan a series of events. For example Roselane ward have multiple events to include as many people and spread as much cheer as possible. The Senior Charge Nurse shared: "the celebrations start with an afternoon tea on Christmas eve, then lots of festive food and goodies on Christmas day. Christmas songs will be playing, and the day will finish with a Christmas movie in the Meaningful Activity Centre. It's not only patients that benefit, the ward are keen to include families and carers in the celebrations. On Hogmany, families have been invited to join the celebrations, we will have Scottish music then mince pies and non-alcoholic drinks to bring in the bells. To finish we plan to get a takeaway delivered to the ward on New Year's Day."



The Senior Charge Nurse from Edenview ward shared how they had spent the funds: "all patients get a Christmas gift bag with socks (with grippy bits on bottom), blanket and toiletries. These are things that the patients can use or take home, which we thought would be helpful with the cost-of-living crisis. It makes the patients feel cared for, cheers them up and breaks up the monotony for some long stay patients. I am going to buy some fun interactive games that the physiotherapist and OTs can play with the patients, this also helps getting patients up and moving. We really do appreciate the funding, it all goes to patients but the staff gain also so much from seeing the patients happy and cheered up."

Dialysis Unit, Royal Infirmary Edinburgh

The majority of the funding the ward receives goes towards buying Christmas gifts for the 160 patients who use the unit. The Senior Charge Nurse bought many of the gifts and did most of the shopping during her annual leave. She explained: "the unit is closed on Christmas day so it's a real team effort to get gifts handed out to patients before this and we know that some patients get nothing for Christmas so to see the shock and then gratitude on their faces is so lovely. I was fortunate enough to see a new patient to the unit receiving his gift, he was laughing and smiling and said: 'this is so nice, this will be my only present this year!! I will put it under my tree and open on Christmas morning'."



Ward 1, Medicine of the Elderly, Liberton Hospital, Edinburgh

The Senior Charge Nurse shared how the funding was being used: "on Christmas day the Deputy Charge Nurse will dress up as Santa and hand out gifts to all patients. I have been buying the gifts for a while now so it's nice to see them all wrapped and ready to go. I also spend the money on little treats for the patients. After they have had their lovely Christmas lunch provided by the catering staff they will get a nice slice of chocolate cake, which is a bit better than the usual custard cream they get!"

Funds had also been spent on decorating the ward, she shared: "all the patients and relatives have been commenting on the decorations and how festive the ward looks. With all the effort staff have gone to, being in hospital can be a really positive experience for some patients, she shared an example, "one patient has no relatives close by so if he was at home he said he would be on his own on Christmas day. It's nice to know that even though it's not great for anyone to be in hospital over Christmas at least here he will be warm and festive and will get a Christmas meal and a gift."



NHS Lothian Charity is delighted to be able to provide a grant programme that enables so many to benefit over this festive period. We recognise that our funding is only one part and without the time, effort and generosity of the NHS Lothian staff team (and often their families too), the positive outcomes achieved would not be possible.

