The Dementia Buddy Service is a pilot project, initially running for one year, to the end of June 2013. It is funded by Kent Adult Social Services and went live in August 2012.

£30,000 was awarded, following a competitive tender process, to the Alzheimer’s & Dementia Support Services (ADSS), a local independent charity.

The funding for the project was used to create a Dementia Buddy co-ordinator post to facilitate the recruitment, training and supervision of up to 20 ‘Dementia Buddy’ volunteers.

The volunteers receive full training from the Alzheimer’s & Dementia Support Services to become ‘Dementia Buddies’ for patients with dementia who are admitted to Darent Valley Hospital.

What is a Dementia Buddy?

A Dementia Buddy is a trained volunteer who has a good understanding of dementia and knows how to engage positively with people with dementia to improve their well being.

The buddy service also helps bridge the gap between hospital and community by signposting patients and carers to support outside of the hospital environment.

Once the person with dementia is discharged, this potentially reduces the chances of readmission. Length of stay on the ward has reduced since the introduction of the service.

Future Plans

The final pilot evaluation is currently taking place and the results and experience will be shared with other Trusts.

A Trust business case has recently been approved to continue to fund the service and expand the Dementia Buddy Service.

The expansion includes:

- Expanding the service to 6 hours per day, 7 days per week
- Rolling out the service to other wards/depts within the hospital, including the Emergency Department.
- Providing an ‘on request’ service for individuals who need the Dementia Buddy support
- Continue with the partnership working between the hospital and ADSS.