

HeadlineZ

Newsletter from
Independence Trust
Mental Health &
Wellbeing Services

Issue 19

Welcome to our next edition of our HeadlineZ magazine

I remember when we put out the first edition, I was told that it wouldn't last any longer than 4 editions. Well, welcome to edition 19! We are still going and that is due to those that contribute articles, poems and stories about personal journeys. We are grateful to you all for making this magazine such a success.


We are now part of GRCC (Gloucestershire Rural Community Council) and moved from our old home in Conway House to Community House, next to Gloucester cathedral, back in the summer of 2022. It is an exciting time of growth for us with plenty of opportunities to further develop the service with the help of the GRCC team. Don't worry though, Independence Trust will continue to deliver its services through our existing team, with the same branding and logo.

As summer has arrived, I hope that as you sit enjoying some sunshine, that you will also enjoy reading through this edition 19 of HeadlineZ. It is full of personal stories, information on events we have done and some of the services we deliver.

I hope that you all enjoy the summer months and are able to get out and about into nature, the sunshine etc does have a positive impact on our mental and overall wellbeing, so make the most of it whilst it is here. But also take care in the hot temperatures that are predicted.

I first want to remind you that we are here and if you need support then please do not hesitate to contact us. We will continue to deliver our service as best we can to the residents of the county of Gloucestershire.

Cynthia Kerr

Senior Operation Manager 

Good neighbours

Independence Trust have recently linked in with our next door neighbours Gloucester Cathedral, joining their weekly gardening group facilitated by Lizzy Hathaway-White, the Cathedral Community Engagement Officer, volunteers enjoy an hours gentle gardening in the spectacular Cathedral grounds. The group work together planting seeds,



tending the flora and fauna along with general maintenance of the grounds. When the gardening is completed everyone heads to the Cathedral Cafe for a drink and a chat. Everyone welcome, meet new people and make new friends in this relaxed friendly environment.'

Call Bill for more information
07976 037700 

Over the last few months I have been working with the **Independence Trust** to build my confidence, learn new skills and build a support network. I have complex physical health conditions and it's been very helpful having someone to make sure activities are accessible.

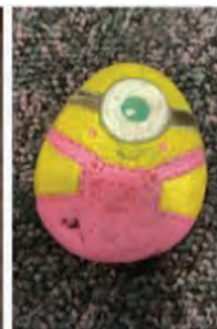
I have joined an online art group for people living with cancer and a craft group near my home. I was really anxious at the beginning and it took a lot of encouragement and support to help me try new things.

I have really enjoyed the art sessions and I have learned a lot of new skills. I have started making cards and Christmas wreaths for charity and using the skills from the sessions at home to relax.



I can now work with clay, use stencils and I feel confident with paints. I am going to keep attending my craft group and I feel excited to try some of the other groups like cooking, mindfulness and flower arranging. I have started volunteering for **Inclusion Gloucestershire** as a **mentor** so that I can give back to the community. 🇬🇧

Stroud's National Citizen Kindness Rocks Independence Trust



Thank you so much to Lucy who organised the **Kindness Rock Project** fundraiser at Stratford Park with 15 of her team from Stroud's **National Citizens Service**.

The **National Citizens Service** (NCS) is a government-backed programme to support, engage, unite and empower young people aged 15-17 and typically runs during the school holidays. We wanted to work with **Independence Trust** which provides a safe supportive service for adults and also for young people 17+ seeking mental health support.

Lucy's fundraiser formed part of the **NCS Social Action** project, to give back to the community of Stroud, by hosting a **Kindness Rocks Project** to raise awareness of mental health in association with the **Independence Trust** charity. The event was very popular with children, parents and adults with a decorative rock painting stall where people decorated rocks and pebbles with positive, inspirational messages to motivate others.

The Independence Trust greatly appreciates Lucy and her team members' hard work and for the £445 raised for our service. 🇬🇧



“Nothing compares to the simple pleasure of riding a bike”

(John F Kennedy, the 35th US President)

We love how the Community Autism Support & Advice service (CASA) teamed up with the Forest of Dean Cycle Centre this summer.

CASA is commissioned by Gloucestershire County Council to provide support, advice and guidance to adults with a diagnosis of autism and their families. (For info please call 01452 317460).

CASA's Senior Autism Worker helped to coordinate the event. He told us how it was very much a collaborative effort.

“This trip was suggested by a lady who attends the Cheltenham ASC Drop-In centre & I asked her to gauge interest by speaking to other people who attend the Gloucester, Cheltenham and Stroud Drop-In centres, with 6 people signing up. Our CASA volunteer (Cathy), gathered the height and leg measurements so that we could assess the right size bicycles to hire. We also made sure that we knew when people had last ridden a bicycle so that we could liaise with the Forest of Dean Cycle Centre for the most suitable bike trail route. At the Cycle Centre, we supported each person to collect their correct bike & their helmets and I rode closely behind the group so that I could keep a safe eye on everyone as we rode around the well known Forest of Dean Family Cycle Trail.”

The feedback from the day is amazing - Well done CASA!

(Hatty) “it was like being a child again. I did struggle a bit and was a bit wobbly but everyone was so kind and patient as there were quite a lot of stops. Not as fit as I was and yes, I did struggle with the gears but by the end I was bonding with them and going downhill at the end was a great thrill and much easier!! It was beautiful though going through the Forest of Dean and luckily the weather was on our side.”

(George) “I enjoyed the cycling at the Cycling Centre. Good facilities, very open to ride your bike, nice to do an outdoors activity with a group of people, it was very good exercise and I would definitely like to do it again & perhaps go on the medium level route for a bit more of a challenge.”

(Cathy CASA Volunteer) “The cycling in the Forest of Dean was a fantastic day out. It was a great opportunity for us to take part in an outdoor activity where we could support each other while enjoying the surroundings and getting some exercise.

I would very much like to be involved in this again and would like to stay longer and cycle further.”

Did you know...? Cycling makes you feel happy because it heightens the production of chemicals in the brain that help to keep you happy, such as serotonin and dopamine. Also, exercise releases the growth of hormones that increase the supply of blood and oxygen to the brain, stimulating the release of powerful mood-enhancing endorphins. 🚴



Community Autism Support & Advice



Swapping Flowers for Food

From Our Garden to Your Table The Weavers Croft Garden Project triples its vegetable plots

Thanks to the huge efforts and enthusiasm of all involved in the Independence Trust Weavers Croft Garden Project. They are tripling the size of the vegetable plots to combat the Cost of Living crisis so that it can help provide more fresh food to people in need. The original Weavers Croft vegetable plot has been well established for several years. In addition to the produce grown being free to the volunteers, the produce is also available at **Food Hubs** (see poster). Anyone in need can just turn up and help themselves to the produce. If you are able to make a donation then it's appreciated, but if not it is free. Nearly all Food Hubs have a **Community Café** open to anyone.

This is one of our new veg plots (below) that we started from scratch in August with carrots, onions, potatoes, beetroot, cabbage and parsnips growing. It will evolve so that we can grow seasonal produce e.g. runner beans,



leeks, tomatoes, cucumbers, courgettes, strawberries, raspberries, spring onions and lettuces.

We have nearly finished clearing a huge section of over growth and the borders are being put in place for the second new veg plot. It's an exciting project. **Can you help?** Would you like to spend time at Weavers Croft Garden Project? You don't need any gardening skills. If you are interested contact us telephone: 01452 317460 or email info@independencetrust.co.uk. We asked one of our garden volunteers what it meant to him. *"I've been coming here for a couple of years, it gives me something to get up for, getting out into nature, seeing my friends here, it takes my mind off things. I was brought up in the countryside so I also enjoy the bus journey through the woodlands."*

Are you a gardener, or an allotment enthusiast who could provide us with advice, or give us some of your time to help us to develop and manage our polytunnel? Our polytunnel grows our seedlings and will continue to expand our existing and new vegetable plots so we can plan our produce season-by-season. We have an irrigation system so we do not need a daily commitment, just some help with propagation and a little of your time please.

Grow Your Own – Beat the Cost of Living crisis - You needn't be as ambitious as Tom & Barbara from The Good Life. If you have a corner in your garden, a backyard or a flat with a window sill, you can grow your own produce. Gardening can be good for you. It helps to release endorphins, the hormone that helps to make you feel satisfied and relaxed. Being outside in direct contact with the sunlight (even in the winter months) can help improve your mood. Think about the produce that you most like to buy... whether you want to think big or small, whether it be vegetables, fruit, or herbs we can help you do this for free! The Stroud Community Seed Bank supplies the Community Hubs with seeds on a quarterly basis to fit with the growing seasons.

Trinity Rooms GL5 2HZ Field Road, Stroud Foodhub MON & THU: 9 - 11am Café FRI: 11 - 2pm	MHCG GL5 1PU Nouncells Cross, Stroud Foodhub & Café TUES: 11 - 1pm THU: 11 - 1pm & 5 - 7pm 07707 126 628	Top of Town GL5 1LZ Parliament Children's Centre Bisley Old Rd, Stroud Café TUE: 10.30 - 1 Foodhub WED: 3.30 - 6 & SAT: 11 - 1 topoftowncommunityhub@gmail.com
Is money tight? At these Stroud Foodhubs you pay what you can - or not at all		
Paganhill Community Group GL5 4BX Octagon Centre, Paganhill WED: Café & 1 - 5 pm FRI: Foodhub 10 - 12am 07828 168 857		Uplands GL5 1TE Outside Uplands Primary School, Thompson Rd Foodhub - Mondays 2.45 - 3.30pm Term Time only
Looking for a Hot Meal? The Marah Trust offers free nutritious hot meals, a friendly welcome & advice & support if needed. Open to all Adults. Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays 12.30-2.30pm <i>The Scout Hut, Chapel Street, Stroud GL5 1DU</i> Saturdays 12.30pm until 2.30pm <i>Saint Albans Church, Parliament St, Stroud GL5 1DP</i>		
Did you know Stroud District Foodbank offers a delivery service to those in need? For a Foodbank referral please contact Citizens Advice on 0808 800 0510* or 0808 800 0511* Monday - Friday 10am - 4pm <small>*calls free from most mobiles, please check with your provider</small>		



Broad Beans & Honey Bees in our garden



Spring Greens & salad crop

Michael's Story

Hi, I'm Michael,

I go to Weavers Croft Garden Project in Stroud and I've been doing this for about 12 months. I have High Functioning Autism (HFA) and I find it difficult to have close relationships and friendships. This affects me being able to cope with many things like clothing, crockery, cutlery and utensils and much more. As I live on my own, I have limited social contact apart from with my parents, so my GP suggested it would be good to connect with the Independence Trust. This was a positive turning point for me. I found it to be a place with like-minded people. I am able to just be me. It made me feel more confident in myself and my knowledge of gardening makes me feel valued and people respect me. My condition affects me being able to change my clothes and it really affected my confidence. Dave and then Rachel from the Independence Trust found ways for me to feel able to wear other clothes. A few months ago I started Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) which motivated me to think about putting changes in place. I still find it difficult, I needed someone to help motivate me, to set me goals and that's what Rachel did. I started visiting shops to purchase one item of clothing but I wasn't ready so I took it back. Eventually I made changes and it's amazing although I was very uncomfortable and I found it torturous to start with. If there was a spectrum of how I felt (1=bad) (10=fantastic), 2 months ago I was definitely a 1 and I'm glad to say I'm now a 6. When I felt like a 1, things were so bad I was very distressed. Support from my 1-2-1 Independence Trust worker and a medication change helped me so much. My aspirations are to make friends and to go places. This is my next goal. It may sound easy but it is not, but I've come so far that I know with great effort I can move forward. I feel it's easier to engage with folk at the Weavers Croft Garden Project. I feel I can make a real difference there too. I have found confidence in my abilities and I appreciate the patience and the kindness that has been shown to me from the Independence Trust. Thank you



Michael has been very instrumental in the planning and the creation of the stunning Wildflower Gardens of Weavers Croft and he is now working on creating another wonderful exciting new wildflower garden project for us. 🌱



The Independence Trust Mental Health & Wellbeing schedule for May to August 2023 is shown below.

To see the full range, go to our website or contact us at: info@independencetrust.co.uk

Independence Trust
Community House
15 College Green
GLOUCESTER
GL1 2LZ
01452 317460



Monday

Gas Green Community Centre 6 Baker Street Cheltenham GL51 9HQ		MINDFULNESS PHOTOGRAPHY Learn the fundamentals of digital photography including composition and exposure at your own pace in an easy-going environment. Emphasis is on outdoor photography with the option of post processing at the premises. Phone cameras acceptable. 11am-1pm	
Gloucester Cathedral College Green GL1 2LX (Meet at entrance)		ACCESSIBLE RUGBY FOR ALL Take part in an hour of gentle, accessible walking rugby. Meet new people and enjoy some gentle exercise. Free of charge, no booking required. All welcome. 11.30am-12.30pm	
Roots Coffee and Community Cafe 69 Alvin Street Gloucester GL1 3AG		PEER TALKING / TEA & CHAT Meet with a member of the Peer Team and talk about what is important to you in terms of your mental health. Discuss Peer Support and Peer Volunteering. Increase confidence and social participation. Improve mental wellbeing and enjoy peer support with others. 1-3pm	

Tuesday

Gas Green Community Centre 6 Baker Street Cheltenham GL51 9HQ		FOCUS ON ART Learn new skills and build on existing skills. Explore different styles of art and artists' work. Gain self-esteem and improve confidence alongside developing new skills. Gain confidence and self-esteem through self-expression. 1-3pm	
Roots Coffee and Community Cafe 69 Alvin Street Gloucester GL1 3AG		CRAFT CLASS Create cards/upcycle. Meet and enjoy the company of new people and share creative ideas. Gain self-esteem and improve confidence alongside developing new skills. Gain confidence and self-esteem through self-expression. 1-3pm	

Wednesday

Gas Green Community Centre 6 Baker Street Cheltenham GL51 9HQ		CRAFT GROUP This group covers a varied range of craft activities, including papercraft, gift tags, card making, sewing and much more. New craft ideas welcome. This promotes the ability to learn new crafts, gain confidence and trust and to have a good time. 10am-12pm (Not during school holidays) BEADING & JEWELLERY GROUP A course to make beaded necklaces and earrings for both beginners and a more advanced class. To follow—beginners' course in Jewellery wax carving pendants and charms, and jewellery making in silver for those interested in making their own pieces. 1-3pm	
University Allotment Site Old Town Moreton-in-Marsh GL56 0LW		GARDENING & ALLOTMENT The main focus of the group is about Keeping Fit and peer support. Activities can be taken at your own pace, but the main concept is to keep heart and muscles active. You do not need to have any experience as regards gardening skills and equipment, however, you will need to wear old, loose, protective clothes for outdoor work. 10am-12.30pm	
Gloucester Cathedral College Green GL1 2LX (Meet at entrance)		GARDENING FOR WELLBEING Join us for 1 hour of gentle gardening followed by tea and a chat (hot drink and nibbles provided). A friendly and welcoming group set in the picturesque surroundings of Gloucester cathedral. 10.30am-12pm	
PODCASTING		TALK PODCAST Are you interested in talking about your personal journey to wellbeing? Would you be willing to tell your story to help others? Well here is your chance. Be part of a podcast family of professionals, leaders, mentors and clients. 'What is essential is to be alive and present to all the wonders of life' - Thich Nhat Hanh. Afternoon (Time to be confirmed by interviewee)	

Thursday

Gas Green
Community Centre
6 Baker Street
Cheltenham
GL51 9HQ



ART FOR ALL

Learn new or develop existing drawing and painting skills. Visit exhibitions and exhibit work. Be part of a group where you can socialise and relax in a creative environment with like-minded people.

Art and Printmaking 10am-12pm General Art 12.30-2.30pm

Westgate Resident
Groups Room
6 Clare Street
Gloucester

BEADING

Join us for an afternoon of creative jewellery beading in a friendly relaxed atmosphere.
(Use the entrance round the back of the building)

1-4pm



Friday

Gas Green
Community Centre
6 Baker Street
Cheltenham
GL51 9HQ



VOICES FELLOWSHIP (Hearing Voices Group)

Safe space to share experiences.

10-11am

ART FOR ALL

Learn new or develop existing drawing and painting skills. Visit exhibitions and exhibit work. Be part of a group where you can socialise and relax in a creative environment with like-minded people.

General Art 10am-12pm
General Printmaking 12.30-2.30pm
Printmaking, project based 2.30-4.30pm



LUNCH CLUB

A Peer Support Group for all to chat and enjoy the delights of a cooked lunch.

12.30pm

Waterstones
Eastgate Street
Gloucester
GL1 1NS

CREATIVE WRITING

Come and explore your writing skills in a friendly and welcoming environment.
Gain self-esteem and improve confidence alongside developing new skills.
Explore different styles of writing.

Fortnightly starting 12th May 1-3pm

Sober Parrot
7 St James Square
Cheltenham
GL50 3PR

CREATIVE WRITING

Come and explore your writing skills in a friendly and welcoming environment.
Gain self-esteem and improve confidence alongside developing new skills.
Explore different styles of writing.

Fortnightly starting 19th May 2-3.30pm

Oxstalls Sports Centre
Plock Court
Tewkesbury Road
Gloucester
GL2 9DW

BIG HEALTH DAY

The event is aimed at helping people with learning disabilities with complex physical and emotional health needs, people with physical disabilities and sensory impairments, autistic people and anyone with mental health support needs, to stay active and healthy.
Pop along and say hello.

Friday 16th June 9.30am-3pm



Saturday

Montpellier Gardens
Cheltenham
GL50 1QA



MIDSUMMER FIESTA

A chance to have a chat and find out what help and support is available to you in your local area as well as across Gloucestershire.

Pop along and say Hi, visit our stall full of information, arts & crafts produced by people experiencing mental ill health.

Saturday 15th July 12-9pm

Upon Application

Eldersfield
GL19 4NX
and
Huntley
GL19 3HH

HHPDA (Horses Helping People with Depression and Anxiety)

Group Equine Assisted Psychotherapy

This Psychological Therapy is ground based, NO riding is involved.
We have 2 facilitators during sessions, an experienced **Equine Specialist** and a **Mental Health Professional**.

Small groups of 4. Groups to support LGBTQ, Men, and ethnic minority communities.

Further information on www.hhpda.co.uk or contact info@hhpda.co.uk



The Independence Trust Mental Health & Wellbeing schedule for May to August 2023 is shown below.

To see the full range, go to our website

→ stroudhub@independencetrust.co.uk
www.independencetrust.co.uk/wellbeing

Stroud Wellbeing
1st Floor Offices
The Cross
Parliament Street
STROUD
GL5 2HL
01453 767999

Monday

Wellbeing Centre
Parliament Street
Stroud
GL5 2HL



WELCOME SPACE

A safe space - somewhere to have a cuppa.
A chance to have a chat in our warm and wonderful Wellbeing Centre.
(01453) 767999.
10.30am-12.30pm

Tuesday

The Market Place
Cirencester
GL7

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK

Shining the light on mental health support in your community. A chance to have a chat and check out what help and support is available to you. The team on the bus would love to find out about the things that you do to help your mental health, whether that is mindfulness, or something else!

16th May 10am-3pm

St Birinus Court
Lechlade
GL7 3FA



Independence Trust CALMHS and CWS

Do you feel isolated, lack motivation or experience difficulty coping with the stress and pressures of life?
Would you like space to talk and be listened to, a chance to build new friendships?
1st Tuesday in the month 10am-12pm

Weavers Croft
Field Road
Stroud
GL5 2HZ

GARDENING GROUP (Weavers Croft)

The Green Oasis project at Weavers Croft Stroud.
Working together outdoors improves people's mental health and wellbeing, building friendships, reducing loneliness and isolation.

10am-3pm



The Bothy
12 Ashcroft Road
Cirencester
GL7 1QX

ART @ THE BOTHY

A safe space, somewhere to have a cuppa.
Be part of a group where you can socialise and relax in a creative environment with like-minded people.
You need to commit to at least 3 sessions.

10am-12pm

DISCUSSION GROUP

Local and global topics up for discussion. A chance to use your brainpower and knowledge to work out how we can set the world to rights for a brighter future.

12-1pm

WALKING GROUP

A friendly gentle social walk around the area.

2-3pm

Trinity Rooms
Field Road
Stroud
GL5 2HZ

STROUD FOOD BANK

The foodbank works using a voucher referral system.
In order to get help from the foodbank, you will need a voucher issued by local agencies.
(01453) 367077

11am-12pm

INDE ART @ THE CAFE

Small friendly group.
A chance to create and chat.

10.30am-12.30pm



INDE CAFE

A chance to chat and share
a wholesome bowl of homemade soup.

10.30am-12.30pm

Wednesday

Curio Lounge
9-11 King Street
Stroud
GL5 3BX

AUTISTIC ADULTS DROP IN

Provides a safe space for autistic individuals 18+ or adults who are considering a diagnosis of autism. Creates a space to meet other Autistic individuals. We offer advice, support and signposting to other services. Food and drinks available to buy.

[May 17,31] [Jun 14,28] [Jul 12,26] [Aug 9,23] [Sep 6,20] [Oct 4,18] [Nov 1,15,29] [Dec 13]

12-2pm

SOCIAL GROUP

A social group aimed at people aged 18-35.
A chance to chat in a safe and supportive environment.
Meet and talk to increase confidence and social participation.

Starting 6th June 6-8pm

**Paganhill
Community Group**
Farmhill Lane
Paganhill
Stroud GL5 4BX

Independence Trust CALMHS and CWS

Do you feel isolated, lack motivation or experience difficulty coping with the stress and pressures of life?
Would you like space to talk and be listened to, a chance to build new friendships?
In partnership with Community Wellbeing Service.

1st Wednesday in the month.

1-3pm

Thursday	The Keepers Community Hub Symn Lane Wotton-Under-Edge GL12 7BD	ART SHAPE @ THE KEEPERS A safe space, somewhere to have a cuppa. Be part of a group where you can socialise and relax in a creative environment with like-minded people. 13th April to 1st June 9.30-11.30am	Independence Trust CALMHS and CWS Do you feel isolated, lack motivation or experience difficulty coping with the stress and pressures of life? Would you like space to talk and be listened to, a chance to build new friendships? In partnership with Community Wellbeing Service. 1.30-3.30pm
	The VIBE 3 Parsonage Street Dursley GL11 4EA	 Independence Trust CALMHS @ THE VIBE Do you feel isolated, lack motivation or experience difficulty coping with the stress and pressures of life? Would you like space to talk and be listened to, a chance to build new friendships? 10am-12pm ART @ THE VIBE Be part of creating a unique piece of art to be exhibited in October with the theme of Loneliness for World Mental Health Day. [Jul 6,13,20,27] [Aug 3,18] 10am-12pm	
Friday	The Silver Rooms Nelson Street Stroud GL5 2HL	 WOMEN'S WELLBEING GROUP Join this small friendly supportive group. A chance to offload and discuss topics in a safe and non-judgemental space. [May 26] [Jun 2,9,16,23,30] 10am-12pm	
	Weavers Croft Field Road Stroud GL5 2HZ	MEN'S SHED A safe place to learn or share skills, where you are able to speak as well as being listened to. A place where we Reclaim, Restore and Re-use. 1-3pm	
	Wellbeing Centre Parliament St Stroud GL5 2HL	TACKLING STIGMA GROUP Tackling stigma together. A non-judgemental space to air our thoughts and feelings about mental health/illness. Look to go out into the community highlighting Mental Health. Signposting support for people experiencing Mental ill health and their family's. 1st Friday of the month 10.30-11.30am RESOLUTION WORKSHOP This 2 hour workshop will help you to create a small number of important, realistic and memorable resolutions, based on factors that are most important to you. 30th June 2.30-4.30pm	

Community Advice, Links & Mental Health Support Service (CALMHS)

We're here to support people who are experiencing moderate to severe Mental Ill Health.

The service can be tailored to help support you to build on your strengths and to make a positive change.

Personal support plans. ● Access to information & advice. ● Signposting/reference to other services.
 1:1 support with a Bridge Builder. ● Peer Support. ● Exploring opportunities to develop and learn new skills.

You will be given space to talk and be listened to as well as build new friendships with people who have similar interests.

We also work with people experiencing Social Isolation, lack of motivation or difficulty coping with the stress and pressures of everyday life (this is not a complete list).

A bit about what we do

One to one support from a Bridge Builder worker, to identify what will help, and how to access it. You will have an individual plan, and the Bridge Builder will work with you for up to six months (this can be extended on an individual basis).

Our Bridge Building Service is a community-based program of approximately six months. The program focuses on your needs and what you want to achieve. It concentrates on your strengths and explores a range of options and opportunities to support your recovery and social inclusion.

This may include support to access or re-engage in volunteering, further education, faith, cultural and social groups, sport and leisure activities as well as groups in your local community linked to your hobbies and interests.

We can work flexibly with you including evenings and weekends. We are lucky enough to have our own Wellbeing garden as well as a Men's Shed. For more information visit our web site or call 0345 863 8323.



For information about other services within Independence Trust

Community Autism Support & Advice (CASA)
Peer Training

<https://www.independencetrust.co.uk/wellbeing/about/stroudhub@independencetrust.co.uk>





Autistic Adult Drop-ins across Gloucestershire!

Hi everyone, I'm Lauren and I am the Autism Peer Support for the Community Autism Support and Advice Service Gloucestershire.

The Autistic Adult Drop Ins in both Gloucester and Cheltenham have been growing successfully over the past few months. We have diverse groups of people from many backgrounds with ages ranging from 17 to 88 years old.

Client feedback and participation at the Drop Ins has enabled us to create a safe and social space focusing on events such as quizzes, games, ice-breakers and arts and crafts. Most recently we had our Peer Volunteer Lisa Smith create a quiz about the Royal Family that all enjoyed. We are encouraging clients to create quizzes and sessions based on their passions and interests. Client participation and feedback is crucial to creating a safe, relaxed and participatory space at our Drops Ins.

We would like to thank all of our members who attend and contribute to our Drop Ins. We would also like to thank the Forwards Employment Service (Gloucestershire County Council), the Barnwood Trust, the Enablement Service (Gloucestershire County Council) and Healthwatch Gloucestershire for coming to speak with our clients about the services available and the research happening across Gloucestershire. Having different services come and speak openly to clients has been a huge asset in giving clients support, guidance and a voice within the community.

It is also important to mention that the amount of people reaching out to the Drop Ins for ad-hoc support has increased significantly. This can include, but is no way limited to, support to speak to their GPs about diagnosis; referrals to our 1-2-1 service; and sign-posting to other relevant services across Gloucestershire. We appreciate the social element of the Drop Ins may not be suited to everyone and we

will continue to offer this ad-hoc support. Looking ahead we hope to continue our Drop Ins in Gloucester, Tewkesbury, Cheltenham.

POST DIAGNOSIS INFORMATION GROUP


- This is a group for autistic adults (18+) who have been diagnosed with autism.
- The sessions will be interactive and informative. For the Zoom invitation contact facilitator Lauren Woods on lauren.woods@independencetrust.co.uk

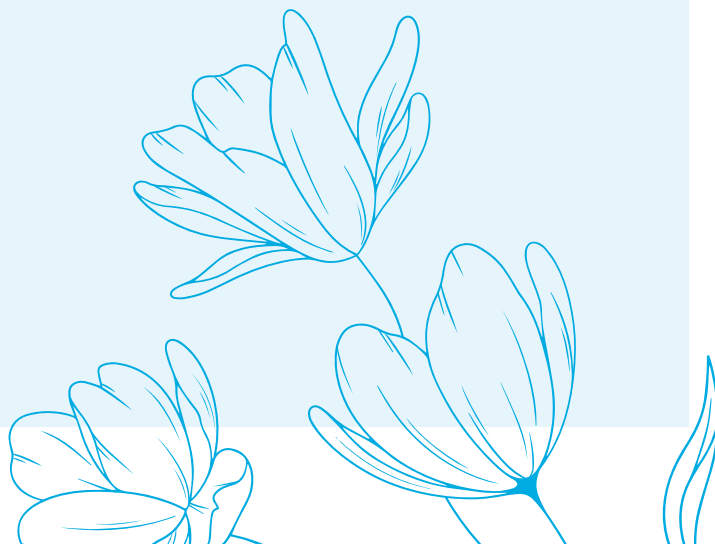
For Zoom invitation Wednesday 14/06 – Family 12/07 – Friendships 9/08 – Romantic and Emotional 20/09 – LGBT+ 1pm – 2.20pm

AUTISTIC ADULTS DROP IN

Provide a safe space for autistic individuals 18+ or adults who are considering a diagnosis of autism.

- Creates a space to meet other autistic individuals.
- We offer advice, support and signposting to other services.
- Food and drinks available to buy!

Drop-ins are held in Gloucester, Tewksbury and Cheltenham. For more information contact lauren.woods@independencetrust.co.uk 



A Little Shed Space Creates Headspace

What's better than chatting around the fire... Well done to our Men's Shed at Weavers Croft for building such a fantastic beast! Built from reclaimed and recycled items, sealed with fire cement and painted with bright red fire retardant paint, it has been affectionately named Stephenson's Rocket as a throwback to the famous locomotive of 1829.

Men's Sheds are a community space for men to connect, chat and create things and the activities are often similar to those of garden sheds. The Men's Shed helps to reduce loneliness and isolation, but most importantly, they're fun!

The concept of Men's Sheds originated in the 1970's in Australia, to promote interaction and provide a space for retired men to learn skills and socialise.

The modern concept promotes mental and physical health and wellbeing through teaching new skills, with woodwork the most popular activity.

One of our Men's Shed folk explained what it meant to him. "I come to the Men's Shed, it's nice to get out of the house spending time with decent people and have a laugh. It's just nice a peaceful place to be. I have very bad headaches, I'm on loads of pain relief, coming



here I can just stop, a chance to step out of reality, give my head a chance to download and people listen to me. The chaps listen to me, give me advice and when needed they tell me to shut up, all in good humour because they're good friends. We are all here because we need somewhere calm and safe to go and the trees and garden are so relaxing."

Another of the members of the Men's Shed (pictured right) made a table and was rightly so very proud. "It feels nice. I've made a bedside table for my bedroom. It's the first time I've made something like this".

If you would like to know more about our Men's Shed or are interested in joining us please call 0345 8638323 or email info@independencetrust.co.uk



Did You Know?

If you have a diagnosed serious mental illness (SMI) you are entitled to a free yearly annual health check. Independence Trust are working with primary care to support 61 practices to engage their registered patients with serious mental illness to attend for the check up.

Annual Health Checks are a way of identifying potential health issues before they become a problem. This means that conditions could be treated or prevented at an early stage. The check includes: blood pressure, blood tests, weight, conversations about diet; smoking and alcohol.

It is easy to arrange, you can book all appointments

direct with your GP practice stating it is for an annual health check.

Alternatively, you can contact Sarah at Independence Trust

who can give you more information and book the appointment for you on 07815116053.

If you are nervous about going to the appointment, just let us know and we can arrange for someone to support you.

Annual Health Checks are important so please think seriously about booking one. [📄](#)



My Journey – Hi, I'm Alison


After the first lockdown started, I didn't realise it but my mental health started to slowly spiral downwards. 18 months later in August 2021 I had a mental health breakdown. I was in a very dark place, I felt scared, alone and in desperation I pleaded for an appointment with my GP. My GP arranged for a mental health assessment (which confirmed I was suffering from severe depression and anxiety) and for the Independence Trust to contact me for a Social Prescriber/ Bridge Builder to be assigned to me. I hadn't heard of the Independence Trust before which is a shame as I could have self-referred far sooner and so I hope my story may help anyone in need.

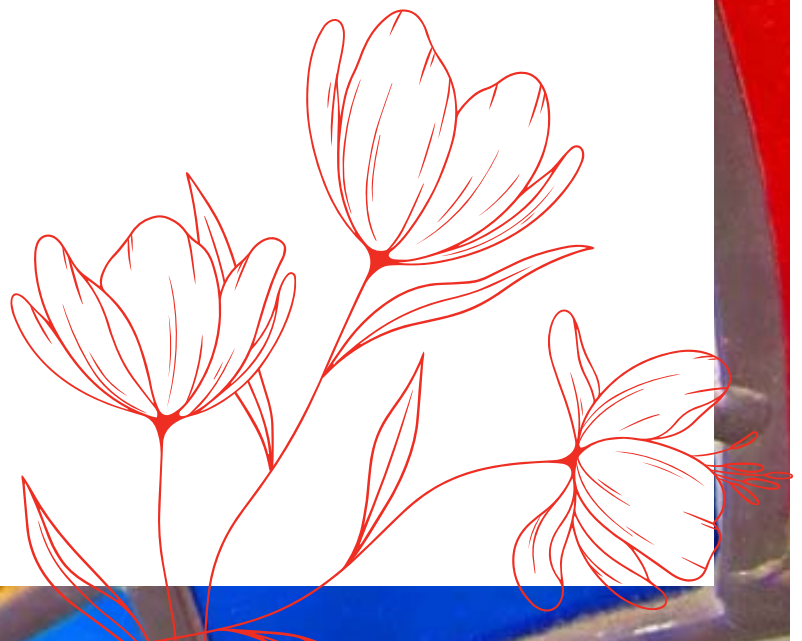
The telephone assessment from the Trust explained their services e.g. CALMHS (Community Advice, Links and Mental Health Support Service); help with mental health social inclusion; to rebuild my confidence; to help manage my anxieties; and that the 1-2-1 support would last 6 months (although anyone can self refer back for more support after that period). They listened to me talk about my fears, anxieties, symptoms, lifestyle and my social isolation. Afterwards it felt like a weight had been lifted off my shoulders, that someone was 'there' who didn't just listen but had HEARD me. From that moment, the Independence Trust became more than a life-line and lifechanger, it was a life-saver - I don't know if I would've committed suicide but when I had my breakdown I was in a very dark place and I just felt like I was existing. Days, weeks and months simply merged into each other. I was utterly lost and broken.

From the start of my 1-2-1 calls with Jane my Bridge Builder, I felt in a very safe space. Our telephone calls worked for me as I couldn't face leaving the house. I took notes during our calls as I didn't want to forget anything. When I look back through my notebook, I'm amazed at the huge range of advice, pointers, support, goals that Jane provided to me. My notebook has become my ongoing recovery journal. Jane was brilliant at coming up with ideas and solutions and signposting me to so many different services for help for both vital financial support but also with managing my depression and anxieties for my mental wellbeing. She had so much knowledge. I didn't know I was entitled to Food Bank parcels and Jane set it all up for me. I knew nothing about energy fuel vouchers (bearing in mind this was early 2022 before the Government introduced schemes for the entire UK population) and she set it up for me so I received money from the Severn Wye Energy Grant fund which was a massive help. Jane told me about free activities and free courses that I could do if I wanted to and she suggested these based on the things that I had once enjoyed before I had become ill.

Each week we started with a recap as to how I was feeling, what might've been good and what hadn't and that would often prompt Jane to come up with ideas and support. It wasn't just about the practical financial ways to help alleviate my anxieties, it was very much focussed on my mental wellbeing and exploring ideas to help to overcome my social exclusion. Jane always suggested things in a way as an idea for me to take away and think about. We would discuss little goals. For the first few weeks, there was only 1 goal, just to try to leave the house and go for a walk for 10 minutes just once a week. That shows what a dark place I was in. Goals weren't compulsory, they were ideas. Looking back at my recovery journal, as the weeks passed, we increased some goals depending upon how I was feeling and I began to respond positively to the goals which helped my mental wellbeing. Some weeks I would suffer a setback and feel very low but Jane was always there to listen and support me.

The amazing support from the Independent Trust was very much person-centred with two interlinked approaches e.g. the practical support, advice and signposting (which was like tapping into an immense resource bank of information) and also mental wellbeing support to provide me with ways, ideas and goals for me to gently come out of my self-imposed social exclusion which gave me hope and to want to be alive and to feel a future. I don't know if any other service provides this perfect tandem. Thanks to Jane's gentle approach I have finally contacted a few old friends who I had shut myself away from for nearly 3 years and taking these extremely difficult steps into social inclusion again feels good.

My last 1-2-1 with Jane was a few weeks ago. I thought I'd feel scared but actually I feel I've been so lucky to have had that amazing support. In a nutshell.... what have I gained? Exactly what it says on the tin... the Independence Trust has given me my independence back and I am pleased to be giving back to them now by supporting them with my skills. 



I'm Tracey


I've suffered with anxiety and depression for many years and I was advised by a mental health professional to self-refer to the Community Advice, Links & Mental Health Support Service (CALMHS) service.

During the pandemic lockdowns, my Bridge Builder from the Independence Trust gave me 1-2-1 support via phone, which really helped me in a way that medication and therapy had not. When the lockdown restrictions were eased, my Bridge Builder worked with me to find ways to improve my confidence and to reduce my anxiety. She enrolled me on several craft workshops at the Adult Education Centre, where I could achieve something and also explore my creative interests.

The first workshop was to make an autumn leaf display from painted clay. My Bridge Builder accompanied me to the first session to relieve my anxiety and to support me. Although my creation wasn't exactly a masterpiece, it gave me a sense of achievement and it taught me some new skills. Even now, when I look at that painted clay autumn leaf display, I am reminded that I can do whatever I put my mind to. The second and third courses were to make more craft items. I learned about fabric stencilling and also painting on glass. I was

very proud of myself that I managed to attend these without assistance!

Later in the year, my Bridge Builder arranged for me to attend a wellbeing day at Cheltenham Animal Shelter. I had expressed an interest in working with animals and possibly volunteering, so this was organised as a first step in achieving this. On the wellbeing day, I helped to clean out the small animals and I got to pet some rabbits to help train them for rehoming! I also learned about cat and dog body language and later played with some cats which was interesting, as I would read their mood a lot better knowing what they were saying to me! At the end of the day, I got to walk a dog which was awaiting re-homing and this was both very relaxing and also educational. The animal handlers showed me how to keep the dog away from other animals, as it was slightly nervous (just like me!) Before I went home, I was presented with a certificate to show I had completed the day. This was very welcome as the certificate remains as a solid reminder to me of not only what I achieved that day, but also what I can achieve for myself in the future.

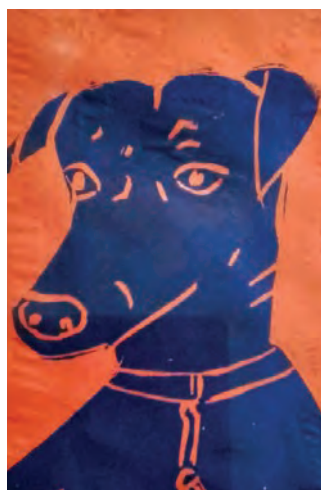
Although I still have a long way to go, the Independence Trust has helped me considerably with starting that journey and they are supporting me every step of the way. 

Something for the autumn

Loneliness is there anyone out there?

Works reflecting our journey of how loneliness has effected our mental health.

Celebrating World Mental Health Day October 2023 dates and venues to follow. 



We met as strangers, now we are all friends

*I found a safe space to talk and to be listened to
What the Inde Keepers Group mean to us from some
of the group I was feeling suicidal, crying most of the
time, not eating, not sleeping, tired of living and a
feeling that I was just existing.*

*I was referred by my GP to the Independence Trust
and my assigned worker there suggested to me that
I might benefit from visiting the Keepers Community
group. My GP also changed my medication and
eventually I started to see a little clearer.*

*After a lot of cajoling I went to the Keepers
Community group (but only after several phone calls
encouraging me to go over a period of time and they
didn't give up on me).*

*I could have just stayed wrapped up in my home
never going out when eventually I found the courage
to go when I had somebody to meet me and to
support me with going to the group. That support
might have been only for 5 minutes at a time and to
be honest most of the time I sat outside not wanting
to go inside. I didn't think I had anything to offer
but it was the sustained encouragement from the
Independence Trust team and the Keepers group
that eventually turned it into a positive experience
to be with people who understand unconditionally
and to meet other people who have lived those same
experiences similar to me. I realised it was not about
having anything to offer.*

(Jane)

*I thought I was the only one going through what
I was going through. I could not imagine others
in a similar situation to me. I was encouraged to
bring my guitar to the group after a conversation
about what we like doing. To be honest, my guitar
was like having my own shield to protect me from
a conversation starter chance where I might feel
anxious. But to be able to communicate in another
way without speech helped me. This group developed
in an organic and an understanding way. Where
before I had my own four walls and the four walls of
my family to talk to, it moved to the four walls of
the group and this has given me a different perspective
of other people's thoughts and experiences too.*

(Dan)

*To help support the dynamics of others in the group
is something I didn't expect. The laid back approach
has worked for me. We might start with a cup of
coffee and a slice of cake but after a while we can be
talking about the toughest challenges and we now
meet up out of the group session and we have even
started our own WhatsApp group.*

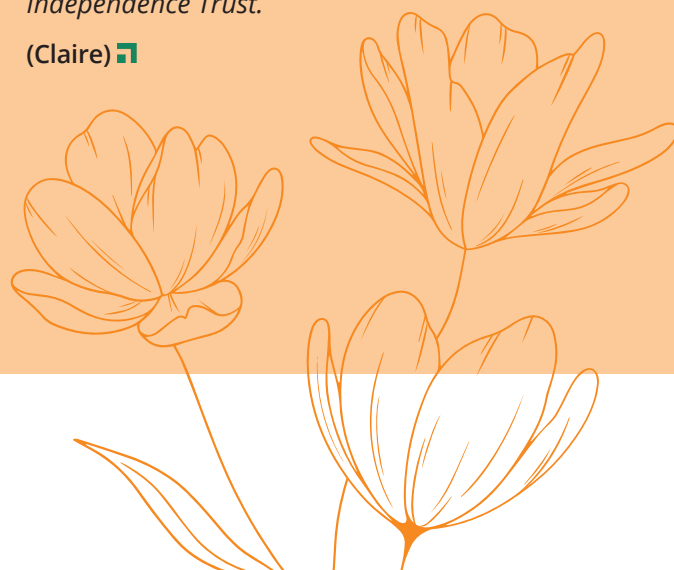
*The Whatsapp group is very low key and we message
about anything.. like "I have found this on the
website with a picture of a funny thing", to, "It's
a sunny day anyone fancy a BBQ?", to, "Oh I feel
low, life is pants". There's no pressure on anyone
to reply back straight away, it's just about peer
support and sharing because you never know what
someone else is experiencing or has experienced
and we appreciate that we all feel special. I should
say it's unique to find a group of people that are so
supportive and encouraging of each other. We've
now even secured our own allotment. It's in its early
stages at the moment but to get outside feels so
good.*

(Sam)

*It's just unbelievable and it's made such a difference.
When we meet up for coffee I really like the dynamics
of the group and we encourage each other to stay
connected. The little things mean so much. We
have a group which has developed organically,
may be just like our allotment! We have so many
individual skills and things to bring which none of us
recognised before, so it's good enough to say we'll all
try things which we never would have done without
the support of each other.*

*We met as strangers, now we are all friends...
who'd have thought it? I certainly wouldn't have
foreseen where I am now and I feel so grateful to the
Independence Trust.*

(Claire)



Budget Beating Family Meals

The new budget beating cookery group at the Stroud Trinity Rooms ran for 6 weeks.

We used a slow cooker to make 4 meals for £4 and we each were able to keep the brand-new slow cooker too! I was so glad to take part and I thought "let's give this a go there's nothing to lose, I like coming to meet new people and do different things". Everyone is trying to find budget beating ways to cope. We made Chicken Curry, Spaghetti Bolognese, Lasagne, Corn Beef Hash, casseroles and a real winner... delicious Sticky Toffee Pudding mmmmmm! Most of us hadn't used a slow cooker before and it was a real success and just at the right time with winter coming. I've learned how to cut an onion the 'cheffy' way and as a team, we came up with really useful ideas so as a group we achieved more.

There were two of us in the group with mild learning disabilities and it was so nice to be seen as a person, just as myself and not as a person with a disability.

One of the group travelled by bus from Bourton-On-The-Water and said that Tuesdays became the best day of the week for them. It became a day to get out which is so important but also meeting lots of people and learning many things with very positive vibes from the group.

Another member who cooks for their family shared with us all their plans to use their slow cooker for Christmas Day dinner. Being on a limited budget, I've learned about using fresh vegetables instead of tinned and this is a really good thing. Having a family to feed on a restrictive budget causes me so much anxiety, but making 4 meals for £4 is amazing!

Linda our group leader would bring in what she slow



4 MEALS FOR £4

Join our budget beating group creating delicious food for an affordable price

You will get your own slow cooker

A starter pack of spices, and stock cupboard essentials

A slow cooker will cost you 40p to cook 4 meals

10am @ The Trinity Rooms Stroud

6-week course starting soon

Call to book your place 07870 808629



With thanks to Stroud Town Council supporting us by providing a grant for the hire of the premises and Stroud Food Bank for the equipment to make this happen.

cooked the evening before so that at the end of each session, we'd all share her culinary delights over a chat. The Craft Group at the Trinity Rooms would join us too, as well the Gardening Group from Weavers Croft, (who kindly provided us with their vegetables), so it became a great way to share a meal and chat with new people without feeling any pressure.

Our thanks also go to The Standing Together Trust for supplying the slow cookers. 



The Standing Together Trust

@standingtogethertrust · Community organisation

Vegetable Casserole (Vegan)

INGREDIENTS

8 ounces mushrooms, sliced
8 ounces button mushrooms, sliced
10 oz yellow onion, diced - one small onion
10 oz carrots, diced - one carrot
20 oz potato - one to two potatoes
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1 teaspoon dried thyme
1 teaspoon ground sage
1 teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
10 oz vegetable broth
15 ounces canned diced tomatoes
2 tablespoons tomato paste
½ teaspoon kitchen bouquet
2 tablespoons flour

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Clean all of the vegetables
2. Add all of the vegetables to a large crockpot. One that's at least 6 qts.
3. Measure and add the vegetable broth, diced tomatoes and tomato paste, kitchen bouquet. **Do NOT add the flour yet.**
4. Now add in all of the seasonings and spices. It won't look like you have enough juices at this point but believe me a lot of liquid cooks out of the mushrooms and you will have plenty after it cooks a while.
5. Stir well and cover. Cook on high 4 to 5 hours or low 8 to 10 hours.
6. Now about the flour - sometime after the juices are hot on up to about a half-hour to an hour before serving -scoop out some of the juices into a cup. Add the flour to the hot juices in the cup. Stir well until the flour is blended. Pour it all back into the stew and stir well. Cover and let finish cooking. This thickens the juices.

Welcome to the team

Denis Mutisya – Social Prescriber Link Worker for the Armed Forces community

I am delighted to have been appointed as the new Social Prescriber Link Worker for the Armed Forces community within the Independence Trust.

I have a military background myself. I enlisted into the British Army in 2008, serving in the Royal Artillery for just over 13 years. During my time with the Gunners I served on operations in Afghanistan, various training exercises and postings (both foreign and domestic). After an incident I suffered a permanent injury and my career had to come to an end.

My transition was difficult like many others but with the help of social prescribing I had a lot of support moving forward and I have the pleasure of now assisting others in my role. My role will be to provide training, assistance and educate the wider social prescribing workforce, GPs, and local Personal Care Networks (PCN) to better recognise the dynamics and background of the military culture.

Over the years Gloucestershire has attracted a large number of the Armed Forces community members and this is growing over time due to the large military presence current and past. All this brings certain challenges associated with supporting the members with health and wellbeing services and for the members who decide to settle in the county who will require support with transitioning and engaging back into the community. Once this is achieved, professionals will be able to better understand the needs and issues of individuals within the Armed Forces community and create a better link with them by being able to provide tailored support. I will also help to engage with the individuals and given the complex issues, work alongside the Social Prescriber



in order to assist their clients. In doing this we can continuously facilitate this service throughout Gloucestershire and create a better support network with other organisations with similar interests.

The Independence Trust has given me an amazing opportunity way forward with the support I received and I am looking forward to the bright future ahead supporting the Armed Forces community.

Also joining us



Sarah and Sue who are bridge builders in the CALMHS team (Community Advice, Links, & Mental Health Support Service) and Emma, Business Support Admin for CASA (Community Autism Support & Advice) & Community Wellbeing Service. 🟩



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