

HeadlineZ

Newsletter from the
Independence Trust
Mental Health &
Wellbeing Services

Issue 15

Good News to start 2019

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a Happy New Year. We start the year with some very good news. We have been successful with our Tender for both the Mental Health Community Service and the Autism Service for Gloucestershire. Although we have been delivering the Mental Health service for some time, we were up against some very stiff local and national competition.

From 1 April 2019, the new services will be known as CALMHS (Community Advice, Links & Mental Health Support Service) and CASA (Community Autism Support and Advice Service). These contracts will give us the opportunity to develop the service with all the new elements of the specifications. Well done to the teams for getting the service to where it is and for their hard work on behalf of the residents of Gloucestershire. Also, thank you to those involved in putting the bid together. I very much look forward to the next few months of preparation for the implementation of the new services and am delighted that we are in a position to move the service along to the next stage, opening more opportunities for those with mental health issues, autism and for their families across Gloucestershire.

Cynthia Kerr
Senior Operations Manager

A Christmas gathering

Stroud took to the opportunity to say a big thank you to their volunteers and peer volunteers.

We have such a rich talent base with our volunteers, their skills, enthusiasm and dedication. We are able to offer a myriad of opportunities at Independence Trust, from cooking, gardening, crafts, photography, walking and music groups. These are to name just some of the activities available led by our volunteers, not to mention the time and a listening ear when someone needs it.



Six Ways to Wellbeing

“How it works for us”

Connect

“Now there is life beyond my bedroom.” (Young person who never been out in her adult life). “I have connected in many ways with my Peers, staff and others outside Independence Trust. Being interactive with others at my lowest points has led me to make friends and accept help. I feel supported, have a social life and have things to look forward to. When I first attended I didn’t talk to anyone or make eye contact. I now feel more confident.”

Take Notice

“I recently attended the ‘Wild for Nature Course’. Independence Trust referred me into this. I have suddenly started to notice the world around me; everyday things that are beautiful, and these are things that when I was really ill I wouldn’t have seen as I was too focused on my problems.”

Learn

“Independence Trust has given me many opportunities to learn new things - Confidence Groups, Up-Cycling and Art Groups. This has been really positive for me. I have recently taken up photography after attending ‘The Wild for Nature’ group. I learned about depth of field and how to use a camera properly. I love it!”

Give

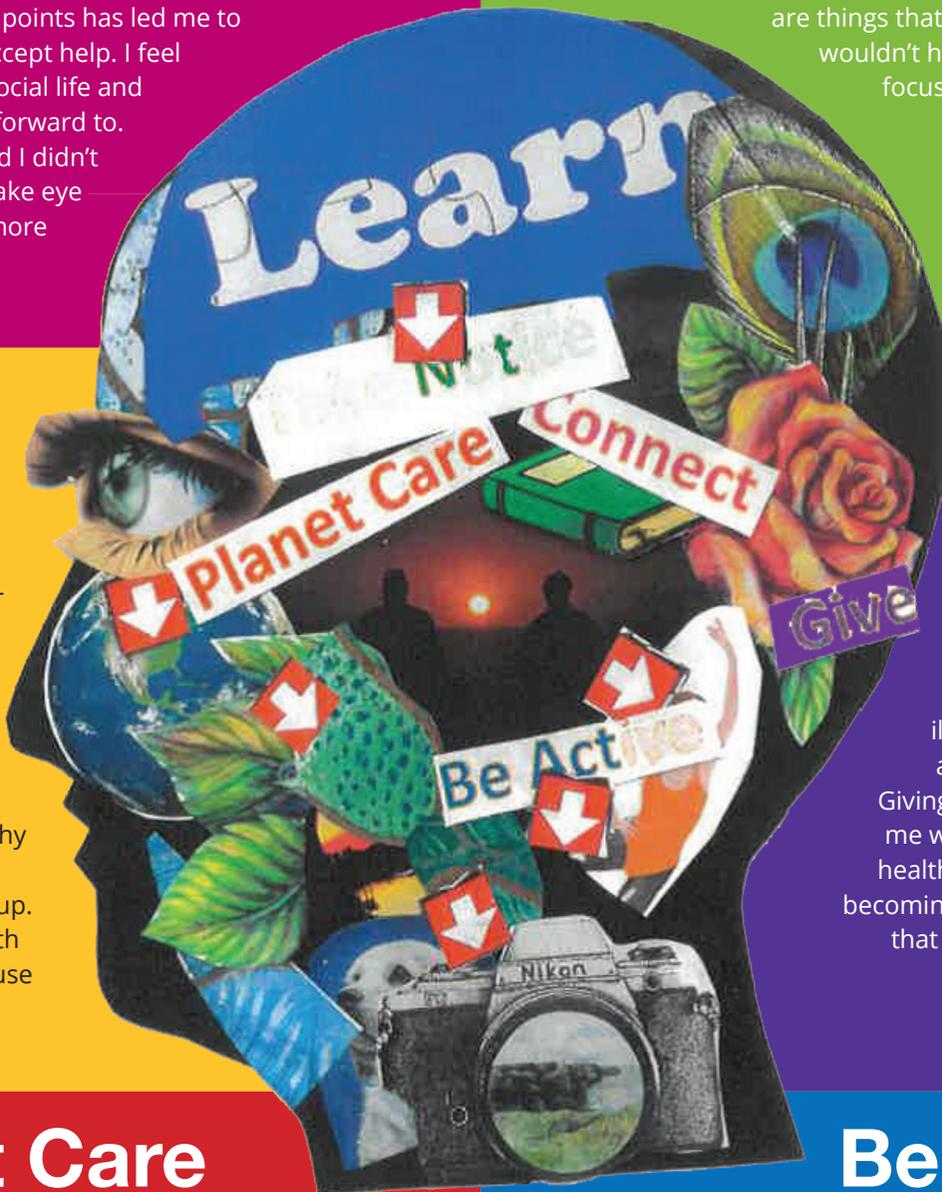
“I give my time, my skills, a smile, a kind word and an ear. I have learned that giving makes me feel good about myself. When I was ill I talked and thought about me all the time. Giving time to others helps me with my own mental ill health. I am thinking about becoming a Peer Lead now so that I can carry on giving.”

Planet Care

“I have been up-cycling - making new from old. This gives me a greater sense of wellbeing as I am making a difference to the world. It may be small but if everyone does something collectively we can make changes for the better. We often have discussions about climate change, and the use of plastic. I am trying to be a better person and help the world.”

Be Active

“I am active in my community now and engage in many things that I didn’t access before. I still struggle with activities such as exercise, but am walking more. I sometimes lack motivation in taking care of myself in this way, but at least I realise this now and this is a step in the right direction.”



Art Group

It is nice to find a place that helps me to take my mind off stuff. The art pushes me in a good way as I am doing something that isn't stressful.

It helps me to change my thoughts into something creative, and if something in my life and thoughts isn't nice, I can channel this into my art and this helps me to process things.



I like the people who attend and I like the facilitators. We all support each other in our creativity as well as with our mental health and anything we are struggling with.

No one is made to do anything, everyone here takes you for who you are.

John Hensman, Stroud

Clair, who attends one of our groups, created these beautiful works of art. They have been exhibited at Tesco, Cam. Clair also makes jewellery and handmade cards. She has gained confidence since coming to the group and says she has made friends. Clair has just walked across the Dales. She organised this herself and she attended Independence Trust's holiday too.



'Singing for Joy'

Mark Cooper was referred to Inde Trust due to depression, having mobility issues and really feeling 'out of sorts'. He was keen to get into any activities to keep him focused which would help him out of his very low state. From the A-Z prospectus, he signed up for the Confidence Building Course which he said did him a 'world of good,' followed by 'Sing Yourself Happy' workshop which was held at Gloucester Library each week and then the Methodist Church. He expressed how he had enjoyed the sessions, but sadly, the funding for the continuation of the course had run out.

Mark, with a few others proactively empowered themselves to seek funding from Barnwood Trust to carry on these sessions, with a view to organically grow and encourage new members. The sessions take place on Wednesdays at The Methodist Church hall Barton Street Gloucester, with a Group name 'Singing for Joy'. The group is for fun, pleasure and to socialise.



On 11 August 2018, 'Singing for Joy' participated in the Barton Fayre, Tredworth, which they were invited by Barnwood Trust to participate in.

The Group have gathered momentum, and while they do not aim to be 'X Factor' contestants, they hope to go from strength to strength.

Independence Trust - This is what we do...



A chance to have fun with friends.



Music Group

For anyone who would like to learn basic skills and who enjoys music.



Weaver's Garden Group

You will not need to have any experience with regards to gardening skills or equipment.



Upcycling

Re-use Recycle Re-useful

Bring your unwanted clothes, shoes and bags to upcycle.



Outstanding Art

Handmade bespoke glass work.



Women's Group

A chance to be heard and make friends.



Summer Holidays

with a smile.

...and there's more...



Award winning volunteers



Tackling Mental Health Stigma on the streets



Peer Power

Peer lead Sharon training Guide Dog puppies.



No Pressure

Young Person's Social Group.



Upcycling Project

Reclaim, Restore and Re-use.



A platform to show our talents and sell our art



Men's Shed

Learn new skills, share your skills.
A place to speak as well as be listened to.

The Festival of Words

The Festival of Words in Coleford this year featured top literary figures such as John Hegley, Andy Seed and Maggie Clutterbuck. In amongst them all, at this Forest celebration of the spoken word, and making fine poetic festival rhythms together, were participants from Rollercoaster mental health support group and the Cheltenham Creative Writing peer support group. The groups came together for the first time with colleagues from Independence Trust and Green Square to facilitate a day of writing workshops and poetry performances. So many verses were created and shared together. There were both tender and powerful moments throughout the day (with more than a few eccentric surprises!) It was a quietly brilliant event with each workshop co-produced by around 10 participants. Three of the peer leads responsible for organising and running the day talked openly afterwards about their individual recovery stories and their experiences of peer leading and peer volunteering:

"I suffer from Achondroplasia. All my life I have found that I am at the bottom of the pile, the old fashioned way of being seen and not heard. It's the way that people look at me with their body language. At school when people picked teams I was always last like I didn't matter. Peer leading makes me feel like I have a sense in life, like I'm meant to be here and meant to be listened to. We all get on and have great fun writing what we want to write and listening to each other's stories. We always have a story to tell. I'm so glad that I have found poetry...this has been a breakthrough in my life. At last people listen, I listen to them and they listen to me, we are all on the same level." **Annie**

"Peer leading has given me the courage to run the group. Having peer supervision meant that I have had someone to turn to if issues come up in the group. I didn't do very well at school so the peer training helped me learn about the things that I am passionate about and learn how to cope when issues come up, plus it has made me more self-aware. I have now got the skills to run a support group." **Sophie**

"As a child I was bullied a lot at school. I was different, with my port wine stain (birthmark) on my face and my stutter (speech impediment). I would tend to hide from people and not speak up in class. Even now, I find it hard to speak in public or large groups, for fear of embarrassing myself, by stuttering. At the age of 14, I started 10 years of laser treatment on my birthmark at Frenchay Hospital in Bristol. I developed a type of risk assessment in my head because of my panic and anxiety issues where I would try to find an escape route and sit near doors. I left school with hardly any qualifications. I attended RFoD College in Coleford and studied for a GNVQ in business studies but didn't do very well with it, due to more bullying and not being able to cope.

I spent a few years working for a supermarket chain in Ross-on-Wye, but was a victim of more bullying, so I left. I then started work at a local social club and was there for 11 years, rising to being one of the bar managers. I left in 2009 due to my ongoing mental health issues. I spent some time doing online courses, as well as some voluntary work as a gym instructor. I have achieved qualifications in Business Administration, Customer Service, Equality and Diversity and Emergency First Aid. I'm currently doing some voluntary work for the Salvation Army, where I am a children's worker. I also help with a peer support group called Rollercoaster, which is a peer-led mental health support group.

As a volunteer and peer lead I help other people to have someone to talk to or as a listening ear. My confidence is still not what I want it to be but I am definitely getting there." **Andrew**

One of the best therapies!

Lou has a passion for arts and was keen to learn a slightly different craft skill. She worked on a one to one basis with her Bridge Builder to learn a craft skill that was different to what she had previously been involved in.

With timely patience and eagerness, she was able to make her floral posy which ended up looking better than the demonstrator's!

She was very proud of what she had achieved with a view to giving the finished product to her Nan whose birthday was coming up.

"I would like do more of it in order to gain more knowledge in this area."

Lou, Gloucester



Climbing up from Rock Bottom

It's been two years since my first admission to Wotton Lawn, Gloucester. At the age of 25 it was a frightening and traumatic experience being detained on the ward I'd spent my whole life visiting my mother.

I was diagnosed with bipolar after a drug-induced psychotic/manic episode in hospital, where I spent five months.

Prior to this I was working as a carer alongside my adult nursing degree at Oxford Brookes University.

I explored art every day in hospital, be it in my room or with an occupational therapist.

A year passed and I decided I wanted to try an art course alongside psychotherapy and was referred to art therapy. This was not really my thing but I still wanted to pursue something to do with art.

I enquired about Art Foundation at Stroud College and was given by a tutor: 5 days and some paper and charcoal. I completed several drawings which I submitted the next week, and got a place!

My final major project was a poem based on my experience in Wotton Lawn called "Two Doors Down". I projected this as a visual print hanging, which you can still see today at the College entrance. I was awarded Art Foundation Student of The Year and gained a distinction for all my hard work.

I completed 30 hours work experience whilst on the course. I found out about Art Shape through Independence Trust. Independence Trust helped me through organising work experience and supporting me in this, with regular update meetings to see how I was getting on. I'm now an Illustration Student part time at Gloucestershire University and am excelling in all I do.

I have my down days when I don't want to continue, however I have built confidence and mental strength to go on when times get tough.

I am very involved in University life including Illustration Fairs where I sell my work and have a role as Course Rep communicating with students, Subject Reps and Academic Course Leader about university experience. This all gets fed back to the Student Union.

Two years ago, I hit rock bottom. I thought I'd never be able to study again after not being able to complete my nursing degree and I'm still under the Recovery Team.

I am hoping to complete Peer Volunteer training at Independence Trust to help others in their

journey, whatever stage they are at.

Please do read my poem "Two Doors Down", as it describes my experience from feeling completely worthless to settling back in to life with a sense of purpose, meaning and contentment.



An A1 print of face close up, "Two Doors Down" Poem printed in column and mp3 to listen to and 3D glasses to see the artwork come alive as an optical illusion

My Final Major Project at Stroud College, July 2018.



One of the charcoal pieces I drew to gain a place at Stroud College, September 2017.

'Two Doors Down'

Sat in my room, room number two,

Looking out of the window not much of a view,

A red brick wall and a gull perched on top,

Yearning for food, of which he will not

Receive in dismay, he looked rather glum,

Made me think of my feelings, I'd now become numb.

Knock on the door, 'We've got your meds',

Realising I'm in hospital fills me with dread.

In the nurses come, one and then two,

I look back out the window at the grey-black hue,

'Here you are then', and I take a look,

One small pot of pills, so quickly I took.

I prayed that night in search of strength,

My weakness cloaked over, a long-darkened length,

I covered my eyes, and wriggled my toes,

In the hope I'd feel something, but the feeling just goes.

Blinded by anxiety and feeling estranged,

Will this be it forever or will things start to change?

So, what happened to the girl sat looking out?

Did she recover? And if so how?

Who did she meet? What did she do?

Where did she go? And why did she too?

The honest truth you wouldn't believe

A plastic bag left in her room is all she would need.

Now let's give this story a more positive end,

Not dodging the truth, but perhaps playing pretend,

A year down the line, she's under recovery,

Feeling better through hope and self-discovery.

She's met someone kind and fallen in love,

The strength she prayed for that night had been enough.

She lives in a bungalow, with grass and a stream,

Where she can sit in the garden, drinking coffee and cream.

Her love sat beside her, her rock and strength.

She closes her eyes and knew this was meant.

Going back to the ward where she wriggled her toes,

Now she feels something like nobody knows.

I am proof that circumstances can change,

You don't go forever feeling estranged,

It wasn't me sat in that room, alone on the ground,

After finding a plastic bag carelessly left around.

I was the girl two doors down

Who now sits in the bungalow without much a frown.

I have bipolar and say it with pride,

As I want to beat the stigma and keep my friends alive.

Life should be filled with adventure, joy and hope,

But its not always how it goes, no it's not, NOPE.

I leave you with one message to help you through your day,

If you're feeling lost and hopeless, just remember 'you'll be OK'.

By Joanna Longuet-Higgins

11/02/2018

Bridge Builder

I started working with my Bridge Builder in March 2018. I was very lost and really needed some support and guidance. Meeting weekly, we would chat about everything so that she could get a better understanding of me and how independence Trust might be able to assist me.

I have really appreciated having someone to talk to! It has really helped me, as due to my mental health issues I don't really see anyone, isolating myself in due course.

My Bridge Builder suggested the Group Horse Psychotherapy course to me. This course was fantastic and helped me to feel more relaxed and happier in myself. I have also developed friendships that will provide me with peer support.

My Bridge Builder continues to assist me in finding courses and other support networks to help me build my confidence and assist me in learning how to deal with my issues.

I feel it is so important for me to remain a part of Independence Trust as it really does help knowing that someone is there for me! I know that when my time comes to leave the organisation that I will still be able to contact my Bridge Builder for support if needed and that I would be accepted back into the service in the future.

I am hoping to take part in the Anxiety Management course coming up and I have also looked through the A-Z and found a few other courses that I feel would help my development.

Ruth, Gloucester

Thank you

I would like to give GRATEFUL thanks to 2 members of your team in Gloucester and Coleford. First I would like to thank the person who assessed me for his perception of my condition when we first met and for accepting my referral from the FOD Recovery Team. The second person I would like to thank is my keyworker whose company on walks and café visits have helped me progress from a 'sad non-human being' into my old self - HAPPY! I now am communicative, funny and healthy with a joy for living.

Many thanks to your organisation for employing such good people!

Thank you. **Neil Roper**

This client has really got her fingers in the pie!

From an inpatient in hospital to volunteering at The City Farm, Tredworth, Gloucester, Clare is in her element.

She never thought that she would be in this position as she has gone through the mill with past trauma.

Clare attended the 'Feel Good Factor' course at the Quakers Greyfriars Gloucester and achieved much understanding and awareness. She says she has gained so much confidence that she feels happier to be engaging in the community, talking to visitors, serving and just being useful.

"Volunteering gets me out and it's great just being part of the community".



Our addresses are below:

| | | |
|------------------|---|----------------|
| Gloucester | 1 Mill Place, Bristol Road | (01452) 317460 |
| Cheltenham | Gas Green Community Centre, 6 Baker Street | (01242) 512812 |
| Forest of Dean | Colliers Court, Latimer Road, Cinderford | (01452) 317460 |
| Cirencester | Ashcroft Rooms, 21 Ashcroft Road and The Bothy, Ashcroft Road | (01453) 767999 |
| Dursley | Tyndale Centre | (01453) 767999 |
| Moreton-in-Marsh | 50 Jameson Court | (01242) 512812 |
| Stroud | Parliament Street | (01453) 767999 |

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