

Pathfinder News



Newsletter for Pathfinder West Sussex, our partners and service users, keeping you up-to-date with developments across the alliance

Summer 2021

We've chosen 'Give' as the theme for this edition of Pathfinder News as one of the five ways to wellbeing. Volunteering and fundraising have traditionally been two of the most obvious ways to give, but the landscape for both these activities has been changed by the pandemic.

In this edition there's a chance to hear from people who have used volunteering as a way of giving something back to services that have helped them, or as part of their recovery journey.

And while this kind of regular volunteering remains very popular, there has also been a move in recent times towards micro-volunteering. We take a look at what that can offer people, and how established schemes such as the Duke of Edinburgh award has embraced the concept.

You can also read about Mid Sussex Wellbeing's offer of a 'wellbeing MOT' to all volunteers working across the Mid Sussex district, how the Random Acts of Kindness movement is inspiring kindness across the community and the opening of Stonepillow's latest service - Hick's House.

If you have any suggestions for future newsletters, please get in touch with us at pathfindercomms@westsussexmind.org.



Patients at the Priory Hospital, Burgess Hill, came up with the idea of making cards and selling them to hospital staff to raise funds for Mind in Brighton and Hove. The project has proved beneficial, with one participant saying, 'being busy and keeping our minds active and occupied has boosted our moods and given us a sense of purpose.'

Jackie volunteers to aid recovery

Having struggled with her mental wellbeing for many years, Jackie reached a point where she wanted things to change and got in touch with West Sussex Mind. She recently shared how she's been keeping herself well during this last year, with volunteering playing a key part in her recovery.

Jackie quickly established herself as a member of a well-established craft group and when the pandemic hit, found it really difficult not to be able to join her friends, who'd all been so supportive of one another.

Once restrictions lifted in the summer and autumn last year, Jackie and her friends decided to get together, to offer one another peer support and continue to create some incredible crafts.

So they sat in a field behind one of the group's houses, with blankets and hot water bottles as the weather got colder, but continued to come together as much as they could given the restrictions, to give one another support.



Picture: Majestic Lukas, Unsplash

Jackie says, 'there were tears at times but we rallied around each other and gave each other support and something to smile about.'

However, even with this, Jackie still found the winter difficult. Now that she was retired she had so much more time on her hands. Having always been interested in helping people she now really wanted to give something back. So she offered to volunteer, to help the NHS with the vaccination programme.

Jackie now volunteers 3 times a week at a local vaccination centre, not minding if she's in the car park, wiping down chairs or directing people where to go. She says that she loves it.

'I love talking to people and definitely feel like I'm giving something back'

In addition, Jackie has found the time to complete a course enabling her to become an animal bereavement counsellor. Although this will be something Jackie does from home, she hopes that this will really help others when they lose a beloved pet.

Micro-volunteering

Micro-volunteering had started to become popular before the pandemic. Changing work patterns and wider interests meant people didn't always want to give their time to one charity or organisation, and nor did they want to be tied to a regular place or time each week or month. Instead, people chose to maybe knit a blanket for a premature baby unit, collect for a food bank or do a neighbour's shopping instead of working regular hours in a charity shop.

It's also a factor that many of the larger charities, such as the South Downs National Park, have a dedicated core of volunteers who stay with them for many years - which limits opportunities for new people to get involved.

With lockdowns meaning people were unable to connect with each other, many turned to the internet to keep in touch and to keep their minds active. Which is where websites such as Zooniverse ([zooniverse.org](https://www.zooniverse.org)), Adopt a Grandparent (adoptagrandparent.org.uk) and Neighbourly (neighbourly.com) have come into their own. These organisations link people who want to volunteer, but not necessarily in traditional ways.

Two other places to look are the DofE website (dofe.org), which has a good list of suggestions for micro-volunteering, and Skills for Change (skillsforchange.com), which is full of useful information to help people use their skills for the benefit of others.

Wellbeing MOTs for Mid Sussex volunteers

Mid Sussex Wellbeing (midsussexwellbeing.org.uk) are offering 'wellbeing MOTs' to organisations with volunteers working across the district.

A wellbeing MOT is a 30-minute, one-to-one appointment through which volunteers can explore their wellbeing, general health and any concerns, receiving personalised feedback. This will include signposting to further advice, guidance and support wherever appropriate. The free sessions must be booked by organisations and not individual volunteers.

Wellbeing MOTs provide a valuable opportunity for volunteers to take stock of their feelings, health and lifestyle, as we move towards the end of lockdown and the next stage of working in the context of the Covid pandemic. It can help with finding balance, identifying stress and overload and exploring how to stay happy and healthy after a difficult year.



Picture: Amy Elting, Unsplash

Random acts of kindness

The random acts of kindness movement is believed to have started in the United States in 1985, when the line 'practice random acts of kindness and senseless acts of beauty' was written on a restaurant placemat by the author Anne Herbert.

Since then, various organisations have sprung up (mainly in the US), which promote the theme of 'random acts of kindness' to improve community wellbeing.

There are now Random Acts of Kindness Days in several countries including New Zealand and the US.

Random acts of kindness are easy ways for people to practice altruism - the act of doing something good for someone without the expectation of material benefit to the giver.

In 2012 the Mental Health Foundation published a report into altruism, having investigated its potential for positive mental wellbeing*. Its research found that doing good deeds can help people in a range of ways including:

- reducing stress
- improving emotional wellbeing
- benefiting physical health
- bringing a sense of belonging and reduce isolation
- getting rid of negative feelings.

Anxiety UK also publishes guidance on random acts of kindness, suggesting it is as important for people to be kind to themselves as to others. And Age UK's website has a page dedicated to suggestions, using the idea of random acts of kindness to reduce isolation for elderly people.

The following list of potential random acts of kindness is an amalgamation of suggestions from the Mental Health Foundation, Anxiety UK and Age UK:

- Smile and say hello to someone
- Do some baking for an elderly neighbour
- Send a quick text to a friend who you know is sad or struggling
- Offer to do a neighbour's shopping
- Sign up to a fundraising activity that will also challenge you
- Offer to walk your friend's dog
- Send a letter to a grandparent
- Pick up some litter in the street
- Let someone in front of you in the supermarket queue
- 'Pay it forward' by donating the price of a coffee in a café, so someone can have it for free later
- Stop in the street for a moment to help someone who is lost
- Make and send a care package
- Do the washing up when it's not your turn.

**Doing Good: Altruism and wellbeing in the age of austerity* is available here: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/Doing-good-report1.pdf>

SPFT placements devise Crawley pilot project



The Pathfinder clinical service has had three OT students from the University of Brighton - Emily Davies, Nimra Badukwala and Eleanor Cheetham - on placement for the last seven weeks.

They have developed a pilot project in the Crawley area "Crawley Connects - Recovery Thought Activity" in partnership with other community organisations.

The aim of the group is to connect people accessing Pathfinder services with meaningful activities and groups in their local community.

West Sussex Mind launches new Help Point

West Sussex Mind has launched a new Help Point, providing a single phone number and email address so people can access support.

Phoning 0300 303 5652 or emailing helppoint@westsussexmind.org will go through to the new Help Point team who will guide people to the support that suits them best. This may include:

- passing details to the mental health recovery team
- giving well-being advice
- showing where to find self-help videos and information
- talking through a diagnosis
- letting people know what treatments or support options are available in the community

More information about getting support from West Sussex Mind can be found at https://www.westsussexmind.org/help_and_support/getting-help/what-happens-when-i-get-help.

Stonepillow opens Hick's House



Hick's House, Stonepillow's latest service, has been officially opened.

The decision was made just over a year ago, in partnership with Chichester District Council, to extend Stonepillow's hostel on Hunston Road, Chichester. The building now has now double the number of self-contained studio flats for rough sleepers with complex needs on the first stage of their journey to independent living.

Hick's House is named in memory of Andy Hicks.

Andy was an ex-client who successfully moved on through the Stonepillow services to enjoy living independently. He worked as a support worker for Stonepillow, inspiring and guiding many people to follow in his footsteps. Andy was a highly valued and much-loved member of the Stonepillow team, and his legacy will now live on through 'Hick's House'.

Fundraising starts to get back on track

Jack Moore abseils down Spinnaker Tower in Portsmouth to fundraise for West Sussex Mind.

The event was postponed twice in 2020 because of the pandemic, but finally took place in June 2021.



Volunteering at CAPITAL Project

Bev Faulks is a volunteer and trustee at The CAPITAL Project Trust. She joined CAPITAL as a service user about six years ago when she was having a difficult time, and knew she wanted to give something back to those who had helped her. She also volunteers as a group facilitator at Bi-Polar UK, and connects people to CAPITAL where appropriate.

Her two roles within CAPITAL give her, she feels, an opportunity to give others a voice by using her own. She likes making a difference and connecting with other people, even though sometimes it is difficult to fit volunteering around work.



Bev Faulks

Bev encourages anyone thinking about volunteering to give it a go, aware of how charities are often reliant on volunteers to help out. She's keen for people to think about where they would have been if the charity that had helped them wasn't there.

'Just do it, if you're thinking about it. There's always something to do, big or small. Sometimes it's the little things that get overlooked, and that volunteers can help with.'

Bev herself gets involved wherever she is needed, such as finding raffle prizes or arranging the distribution of collecting tins.

'We're really fortunate at CAPITAL that members are happy to give their time, a raffle prize etc. What they can. We're all in the same boat and have got each other's backs.'

'People can't wait to get stuck in again.'

Latoya Labor is CAPITAL's Northern Co-ordinator. Part of her role is to manage volunteers, put forward opportunities to get involved and ensure volunteers are supported and trained as appropriate for the role in which they are interested in.

Internal workshops are currently running online in preparation for the return of face-to-face interaction. Workshop topics include assertiveness, confidence and positive thinking.



Latoya Labor

Latoya says that there has been little change in the amount of enthusiasm for volunteering during the pandemic. With appropriate support from staff, volunteers have continued to work collaboratively within CAPITAL, offering their time, skills and knowledge in areas such as research, workshop development, facilitation of online peer support drop-ins and groups, university work etc.

There is an appetite to return to face-to-face volunteering as soon as possible.

CAPITAL is the acronym for Clients And Professionals In Training And Learning

Pathfinder volunteering opportunities

Pathfinder partners offer a range of volunteering opportunities; from helping out at fundraising events to providing peer-to-peer support and acting as translators. Below are links to and details of some of the current openings (as of mid-July 2021), although not all partners have active opportunities at present. Contact the organisations separately to find out more.

Stonepillow

<https://stonepillow.org.uk/working-at-stonepillow/current-volunteer-opportunities/>



Stonepillow is currently looking for volunteers across its retail, accommodation and fundraising activities. Perhaps you have a couple of hours a week to spare translating for Eastern European clients? Or would you enjoy helping customers in one of Stonepillow's charity shops?

West Sussex Mind

<https://www.westsussexmind.org/get-involved/volunteer-with-us/volunteering-opportunities>

The launch of West Sussex Mind's new single point of entry help point has created a number of volunteering opportunities, for people with good listening skills who enjoy talking on the phone. There are also openings for volunteers in fundraising, social and leisure activities, and events.



United Response

<https://www.unitedresponse.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer/>



United Response offers a flexible volunteering programme, matching local needs to the skills and preferences of volunteers. Opportunities can include organising events or social activities, giving support (alongside a support worker) or raising awareness.

Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust (SPFT)

<https://www.sussexpartnership.nhs.uk/volunteer>

If you like to volunteer outdoors, SPFT's Forget Me Not unit is looking for people to give regular help keeping its garden weeded and watered. Or perhaps you'd like to give your time helping gather feedback from people who use SPFT's services (including families, friends and carers)?



Pathfinder volunteering opportunities

Mind in Brighton and Hove

<https://www.mindcharity.co.uk/get-involved/volunteer/>

No active volunteering opportunities in West Sussex at present. Why not bookmark the website, though, and be among the first to read about vacancies when they arise? Brighton Housing Trust/Sussex Oakleaf



Richmond Fellowship

<https://www.richmondfellowship.org.uk/volunteer-with-us/>



Offering a range of opportunities including student placements, befriending and helping out at services, Richmond Fellowship asks people looking to volunteer to contact their local service with regards to current openings. Richmond Fellowship's information leaflet for potential volunteers is available on its website.

Brighton Housing Trust/Sussex Oakleaf

<https://www.bht.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer-for-bht/>

No active volunteering opportunities in West Sussex at present. Why not bookmark the website, though, and be among the first to read about vacancies when they arise?



Southdown

<https://www.southdown.org/about-us/get-involved>



Volunteering opportunities tend to be designed for people who have accessed services.



What is Pathfinder West Sussex?

Pathfinder West Sussex is an alliance of organisations working together to enable people with mental health support needs, and their carers, to improve their mental health and wellbeing.

We provide a pathway of mental health recovery support so people can move freely between services to get well and stay well.

Services are provided in ten areas: Adur, Bognor, Chancetonbury, Chichester, Crawley, Horsham, Littlehampton, Midhurst, Mid Sussex and Worthing.

Our website (www.pathfinderwestsussex.org.uk) is updated weekly with news and blogs, and also gives contact information for all partners.

