

# Connect

OUR QUARTERLY  
NEWSLETTER

Spring 2020

Issue 3

Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter

## An Update from our Chief Executive

I hope that everyone is staying safe and well at this difficult time in the world. In response to the situation, Southern Brooks has been working with other voluntary sector organisations, South Gloucestershire Council, Sirona and the Clinical Commissioning Group to keep people and communities safe and well.

It's wonderful seeing the voluntary community action taking place, with mutual aid groups and support groups springing up all over South Gloucestershire. An amazing example of the power of people to make a real difference to the lives of others. We hope this greater connectivity between people will continue into the future as it offers our best chance of sustainable communities.

We are seeing the national campaign led by Locality, "Keep it Local", really coming to life. South Gloucestershire Council, as part of winning a national Locality award in November 2019, is already committed to the campaign.

As we work together as one team, we are really seeing how local

connections and knowledge between people working across agencies, volunteers and communities enhances this 'joined up' working.

In our Autumn 2019 newsletter we highlighted the work of the Better Way Network. What we are now seeing is the spontaneous development of the Better Way principles. In [Insights for a Better Way](#), Clare Wightman and Steve Wyler demonstrate that people within communities can often provide better support than public services.

These positive stories emphasise collaboration, not competition. The network highlights a clear role for those who have responsibility for places and services. The public sector, VCSE and businesses need to take responsibility to ensure that people and organisations work collaboratively to build on the strengths and respond to the needs of each person within the community.

Julia Unwin, former CEO of Joseph Rowntree Foundation emphasises how relationships are key to getting you through when you're

sad, angry, lonely or sick.

I'd like to think that the way people and organisations are working together in South Gloucestershire is a great example of the Better Way principles. The wealth of community Volunteer-led activity that has developed quickly is a testament to the power of people to build their own networks and be seen as partners, not consumers of services.

This has always been a guiding principle for Southern Brooks, helping where needed to build the individual and social resourcefulness that creates community resilience.

The active partnerships between South Gloucestershire Council, Southern Brooks, CVS South Gloucestershire, other VCSE providers, the Clinical Commissioning Group and Sirona are based on sharing a set of principles and values that helps us work together to save lives and keep people safe.

*Sally Close*

*Chief Executive*




# Southern Brooks COVID-19

**Emergency phone & email service:**

**Monday - Friday 11am-7pm**

**Saturday & Sunday 12noon-6pm**

**(hours of service subject to change)**

 **0333 5774666**

 **communitysupport@southernbrooks.org.uk**

Since Tuesday 7th April Southern Brooks Community Partnerships has been operating a daily phone service. We have seen an increase in calls from 64 in the first week to 93 in the week commencing 20th April.

The majority of queries are about food or prescriptions and we are working with South Glos Council, as well as all the wonderful Mutual Aid Groups that have sprung up all over South Gloucestershire to deliver to those who need help.

We have some great volunteers working with us who drive or cycle around as required and who are working with our youth work team to make up art packs for 400 children and young people in South Glos. Each of them will receive 4 packs over 2 months thanks to a grant from Quartet

The Youth team are also running twice weekly Zoom sessions so that young people can keep in touch with each other and their youth workers, can talk about worries and get advice.

One You South Glos is continuing to provide wellbeing support through 1:1 phone calls and the team has

embraced new ways of working to provide online peer support groups and online wellbeing workshops. They are working even harder than usual as the number of people presenting with poor mental health is increasing as a result of Covid 19 and the lockdown.

The Southern Brooks team is working amazingly hard in response to Covid 19 and to keep 'business as usual' going.

Social prescribing referrals are coming in from GP practices across South Gloucestershire. Our team of link workers, some of whom have started during lockdown and therefore only met one another through Zoom or Teams, are picking a wide variety of needs including how to claim Universal Credit, how to access mental health support, how to maintain their electricity supply.

We have a team of volunteers working with staff to make check in calls to people who haven't needed support but whose circumstances may change as lockdown continues

Doctors of The World have guidance in multiple languages available [HERE](#).

**239** Client Contacts  
**19** Prescriptions Delivered  
**82** Food Parcels Delivered  
**19** Wellbeing Support  
**41** Referrals to Mutual Aid  
Groups



**in the  
first 21 days  
of service**

## Social Prescribing during the COVID-19 pandemic

Southern Brooks are providing the social prescribing service to all GP surgeries in South Gloucestershire, working in partnership with DHL.

Our link workers have been working with several surgeries to help patients improve their quality and life and well being since the beginning of the year.

In these uncertain and worrying times our service is adapting rapidly. We are working closely with the practice managers and GPs to make sure that we can offer support to everyone that may need it. GPs will be identifying those that are in most need of the social prescribing service and will be referring them to us.

Originally designed to help eliminate social isolation; we now help to facilitate it safely.

Isolated does not have to mean lonely and our team are here for everyone's well being.

Social prescribing link workers will be able to help access deliveries, medications, welfare calls, liaise with agencies and facilitate food parcels to those in need.

If a GP surgery feels that a patient of theirs needs support from a social prescriber during this time, they will refer them to us and a link worker will be assigned to offer support. There is nothing a patient needs to do to access this service; if they are identified by a surgery, they will receive a call from a link worker.

As things change our service will adapt to meet the needs of patients in coordination with GP surgeries. Please check our [website](#) for any further updates.

# News

## It's Time To Change

Southern Brooks will be showing our commitment to changing the way we think and act about Mental Health by signing up to the [Time to Change](#) Employer Pledge.

Our commitment will include a 12 month Employer Action Plan, founded on the principles of the 2017 Thriving at Work Report and built upon 5 years of evidence-based interventions

which have been researched by the Time to Change Employers Team.

This will help us to put in place best-practice interventions and policy to help staff work in ways that promote a positive mental wellbeing.

Over 1,400 organisations employing over 3 million people have now signed the Time to

Change Employer Pledge, which is free of charge and available to organisations based in England. We are proud to be one of only five organisations in South Gloucestershire to commit to the pledge so far.

We have submitted our action plan, and hope to sign the pledge in the presence of Sara Blackmore SGC Director of Public Health, as soon as we are able.

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## Dennis didn't stop us from feeling good!

250 people braved Storm Dennis on Saturday 15th February to take part in our annual Feel Good February Fair at the Kingswood Estate.

There were lots of free wellbeing activities for people to take part in, from the physical - a gentle Yoga session, a game of table tennis with colleagues from the One You South Glos Healthy Lifestyles team and peddling on a smoothie bike (to be rewarded with your own peddle-blended banana and strawberry drink!) - to the more mind-and-soul-focused - like our Wellbeing Team's problem-solving booth and positive affirmation lucky dip, and creating beautiful works of art with community artist, [Sophie Rae](#).

[The Littlest Lives Rescue](#) brought along some of their rescued rabbits and guinea pigs for people to stroke, Bristol Starlight Cheerleading Squad put on an amazing performance for us, and many children (and adults!) got their faces painted.

Almost everyone who came along said they felt more involved and connected to their community as a result of the event and went away with more knowledge of what's available.

With huge thanks to Caroline and Susan from Asda who provided fruit for everyone there (including our smoothie bike) and were on tea and coffee duty!





# Our Vital Volunteers: Jenni

“ I like to make a difference ”

Jenni has been volunteering with Southern Brooks for the past 18 months on a student counselling placement. She enjoys helping people to feel more confident and capable of reaching their full potential.

“ I like to make a difference, to help others. I started volunteering many years ago when my children were small, I felt isolated and alone as a new mother.

I found joining groups helped me connect and make friends, I was part of something which made me feel supported and valued. I wanted others to feel the same,

it wasn't long before I started volunteering. Through my volunteering I discovered I was passionate about helping others, this started my journey down the counselling path. ”



have a purpose in life, offering everyone the opportunity to find themselves, grow and be part of something much bigger in their community. ”

Now is a great time to think about volunteering! There are so many brilliant community groups, charities and activities taking place across South Gloucestershire that people have a wide choice of opportunities to pick from.

We can help people find something to suit their skills and interests, from driving a minibus for Green Community Travel to leafleting within your community.

If you've often thought about volunteering, you can make this happen by contacting us at:

✉ volunteeringate@southernbrooks.org.uk

Yate - 07817 089576

Patchway - 07973 781616

Kingswood - 07969 189485



Find out more [HERE](#).



“ Volunteering is a lifeline for so many, from all ages, cultures and social groups. There are opportunities to meet new people, develop new skills, be challenged,

# Our Community Hubs

## Cranleigh Court, Yate

Our Cranleigh Court Community Development Worker, Sato has been speaking with local people for the past year about what they would like to see in their neighbourhood and how they could contribute, with the aim of building a stronger community.

There was no central place where people could meet, but four residents - Mike, Catalin, Barry and Brian - talked about creating a space where neighbours could come together.

From this, the Cranleigh Court Coffee Group was founded. The group designed a flyer that would reach the wider community and delivered it door to door. Lynne read the flyer and decided to pop along.

She soon encouraged her neighbours to come with her, and is now actively involved in the group, setting up a Facebook page for the Coffee Group.

“ I like to promote the lovely area where we are living. We've seen our children grow up together and I would like to bring people back together ”  
**Lynne**

“ When you are retired and lonely yourself it is difficult to socialise. You are made very welcome here by everyone and it's easy to become one of the group. It is very interesting to hear about other things people do and learn new skills. ”  
**Barbara**

“ Coming from Wales I'm used to greeting people and always having conversation with neighbours, but it seems to be quiet here. [The Coffee Group] is a wonderful thing. Somewhere to come and chat and have fun! ”  
**Karolyn**



To find out more about our work in Yate, click [HERE](#).

# Project in Focus:

## West of England Works

West of England Works was originally a three year project, due to end in December 2019, and we are thrilled that it has been extended by a further two and a half years.

In 2019, we supported a total of 81 people. Of these, 21 gained employment, 13 went onto further education or training and 20 moved into actively seeking work.

Our Employment Coaches help to give people confidence to actively seek employment, as well as showing them where to look for work or training opportunities, which has a positive impact on their mental health.

The support doesn't end there. Our Coaches often accompany participants at interviews, work experience and volunteering placements – giving them that much needed support and boost of confidence which would otherwise see them missing out on these opportunities, not feeling confident to do it alone.

### Ray's Story

\*name has been changed to protect identity

Ray\* had been a carer for his mum for many years. He hadn't completed an application form or attended an interview in all that time and felt really out of touch with the job market. He attended our 'Into Paid Work' course, and was enthusiastic about gaining new knowledge and skills.

During his time on the course Ray created a CV, completed several employability activities and undertook mock interviews with real employers. His confidence grew to match his likeable and approachable nature, and he started job searching independently.

Ray told his Employment Coach that he had seen a Care Worker job advertised in the local area. This sounded like the perfect job for him, having the natural qualities and personal experience needed for such a role, so his coach urged him to apply for it. Ray did great in his interview and was offered the job! We were able to provide a reference for him, and he started his new job in April 2019.

We've kept in touch with Ray and met with him several times since starting his job, to ensure he is transitioning back into employment well. He loves his job and feels proud of the progress he has made – as are we!

We're excited to be able to continue our work to support people back into employment, education and training.

To find out more about the West of England Works project, including how we are supporting clients during the COVID-19 pandemic, click [HERE](#).



Strong Communities Powered by People

☎ 01454 868570

🌐 [www.southernbrooks.org.uk](http://www.southernbrooks.org.uk)

✉ [office@southernbrooks.org.uk](mailto:office@southernbrooks.org.uk)

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