

# Connect

OUR QUARTERLY  
NEWSLETTER

Summer 2021

Issue 4

Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter

## Introducing our new CEO - Alison Findlay

I'm delighted to be the new CEO of Southern Brooks, building on the work of the organisation over the last 30 years and taking us into the next phase.

We are strongly committed to work with individuals and communities in South Gloucestershire so they thrive, and we want the same for our staff and volunteer community too: for everyone to be the best version of themselves.

Our strategy for the coming months and years focusses on excellence in communities, strong alliances and developing our reputation as a generous partner. We are stronger together.

I've been at Southern Brooks for 4 years, starting in Kingswood as the community development worker before taking over the Health and Wellbeing lead role.

During my career I've worked for Bristol City Council developing multi-agency services for children and young people, for Oasis Community Partnerships across the South West and Kent, and earlier than that I worked at Essential Trading, a workers' wholesale cooperative in Bristol selling wholefoods to the retail and hospitality trade. The theme of my career is partnerships and collaboration in whatever role or sector I'm in.

The challenges we face as an organisation and as a sector following the pandemic are significant. More people are struggling with poor mental health and emotional wellbeing, people feel lonely and isolated and some are facing unemployment as their furlough arrangements come to an end.

We know the work we do is needed and yet there is



instability for organisations as funding changes.

We have a strong Senior Leadership Team made up of new members of staff and some who've been here for much longer. We are working hard together to ensure our strategy brings longevity and sustainability so we can continue to provide support for our communities.

I'm looking forward to working with all of you over the coming months.

*Alison*

# News

## College Student's Fantastic Fundraising

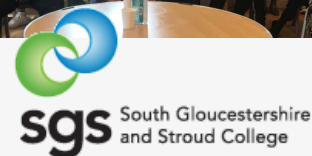
A big, big thank you to the 20+ students from the BTEC Business Studies course at SGS College who raised funds for us, by running fundraising activities as part of their events management module.

They held quizzes, ran games evenings, organised a t-shirt design competition, boxed and walked, raising over £1,000 for our youth work services and dementia cafes.

The money raised will be used to buy materials for activities and to run interactive sessions with young people, those with dementia and their carers.

Having fun and reliving memories helps to build confidence and resilience at a time where this is much needed.

The students have helped make a real difference to people's lives and should be justifiably proud of themselves for what they've achieved.



---

## “We Are BS15” in Kingswood

A grassroots initiative which started from the Facebook COVID support groups and helpline that the founder set up last year and were extremely well used.

Her energy and passion to support her local community has driven this network to become a fully fledged local support group now registered as a CIC (Community Interest Company).

They are establishing many community projects to support people living in BS15. The first project they are coordinating is a community kitchen set up in a local church.

The tasks the groups are learning how to do include; creating a fundraising platform collating of recipes, a cooking rota, clearing the church so it is fit for use.

SBCP community co-ordinator Zaya Morris-Taylor is continuing to support the group through this exciting journey. It is a brilliant group of people who are very proactive and really want to help the BS15 area thrive.

<https://wearebs15.co.uk/>

# Volunteering in the Past Year

There has been a huge community response to supporting people in need during the toughest points of the pandemic.

People offering their time, skills and expertise to help others by running errands to collect food, pick up prescriptions and check in on neighbours.

Whilst some of this has been run through the Southern Brooks channels, much has happened at a street level in an informal way.

It has been heart warming to see how willing people have been to lend a hand and want to make a positive contribution during such a difficult time.



Food poverty has been a major issue for many years and the past year had exacerbated this for many families.

Fortunately, we have been able to respond agilely by establishing a weekly Food Club in Patchway in partnership with Family Action and continuing the Community Fridge in Cranleigh Court, Yate.



Yate - 07817 089576  
Patchway - 07973 781616  
Kingswood - 07969 189485



volunteeringyate@southernbrooks.org.uk  
barbaraball@southernbrooks.org.uk  
zayamorris-taylor@southernbrooks.org.uk

Find out more about volunteering [HERE](#).

# Employment Support Throughout COVID

Our West of England Works Employment and Skills Development coaches continued to work with participants throughout the pandemic by phone or using online formats such as Zoom and Teams, enrolling a further 18 eligible individuals onto the project.

When restrictions allowed, they safely began to meet participants for wellbeing walks and eventually returned to face to face sessions.

Along with supporting participants with accessing IT equipment, food, prescriptions and other needs arising from lockdowns, our Coaches also continued to support participants to achieve their goals, with fantastic results.

We also adapted our job club provision, offering support to those who did not meet the eligibility criteria for West of England Works. Around 40 individuals received phone support and later, during periods of lighter restrictions, face to face support across Kingswood, Patchway and Yate.

We are excited for the return of job clubs in June which will accommodate support for up to 20 people per week.

Find out more about Job Clubs [HERE](#).

“ Without the support from Lewis and Paige I feel I wouldn't have been confident enough to overcome my barriers. I feel far more ready to start work now. ”

\*Nick, BBO Participant

## Our Impact over the past Year

- 13 individuals enrolled on training courses which will give them much needed skills and experiences.
- 8 participants gained key job search skills which will allow them to search for suitable work confidently and independently.
- 3 participants gained employment, but these were all impacted negatively by the Covid-19 crisis.
- 20 individuals reported an increased confidence and awareness of training and employment opportunities,
- 18 reported an improved awareness and ability to manage their health and wellbeing.
- 10 undertook volunteering during their time on the project.

Find out more about  
Employment Support [HERE](#).





# Training Update

When the pandemic hit, we had just started delivery of two Level 2 / 3 Youth work courses to 32 learners. We had to adapt the course very quickly from being face to face to online. This was a challenge as we have delivered these courses for over 25 years and have never delivered any of them remotely.

The learners were all very patient whilst we adapted and we soon found what worked online and what didn't. It was a challenge initially, but proved to be successful. We finished delivery of this course in October 2020.

As this was so successful, we have since started delivery of another 3 youth work courses and were able to secure some bursaries to fund some learners on this course.

We currently have 40 learners undertaking their Level 2 / 3 in Youth Work who will be qualified by the end of 2021.

After consulting with learners about their experience of the course online, we have decided that we will use a blended approach of face to face and online sessions to deliver this qualification in the future which will hopefully give learners a great experience.

**“ Although it has been a challenging year with lots of changes, the course provided me with a lot of motivation. I set out prior to starting this course to expand on my experience and understanding of youth work. I wanted to become more confident. I feel have achieved this, thanks to your support, course content and feedback. ”**

**“ I haven't been in education for over 20 years and was really worried coming on this course, but the teaching style, the layout of the course and the support offered was completely unlike any other experience of education I have had before. I am so glad I came as I learned so much and am now excited to learn more. ”**

To find out more about training with Southern Brooks click [HERE](#).

# Youth Work

The Patchway youth work team have been very busy during the pandemic. The inside of our youth centre has been refurbished by a team of amazing volunteers along with the youth work staff. When you walk into the youth centre now, it gives a sense of calmness and is welcoming. The young people love it.

Over the past year, we have created and delivered over 1400 art and craft packs to children and young people across South Gloucestershire. The packs were created to encourage young people to be creative, whilst giving them something to do during the lockdown periods.

**“ The art packs were a god send during lockdown all 3 of mine were so excited when they arrived... well done Southern Brooks. ”**

As a result of this, we delivered Halloween art and crafts sessions for families living in Patchway & Charlton Hayes. We had 35 families come and take part and they really enjoyed themselves.



We continued to deliver youth work sessions throughout the majority of the pandemic. We had to adapt our sessions from being based inside the youth centre to going out on detached, holding sessions in our field and through 1-2-1 phone calls to young people.

During the past year we delivered 156 sessions and supported 328 young people.

In August 2020, we noticed an increase in the number of young people struggling with isolation and/or mental health. We decided to change one of our sessions to art therapy which has proven to be very successful.

**“ I can't wait to come back to art therapy next week! ”**



**“ The art therapy is working well; my daughter has been building and creating lots and said she feels inspired. ”**

To find out more about our Youth Work click [HERE](#).

# ONE YOU SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE

\*Claire is retired and is a carer. She came to OYSG with feelings of stress and low mood, including what she identified as stress induced tinnitus. Concerned about side effects, Claire has avoided taking prescribed medication. Instead, she hoped that using a wellbeing plan could help to change her feelings of low mood and stress.

Talking with a Wellbeing worker helped Claire to identify that the ongoing uncertainty of the Pandemic had built up stress that she was otherwise unable to release, or talk about.

Our Wellbeing worker identified ways to bring a fresh feeling to Claire's daily walks:

- driving to a different starting point.
- mindfully walk, actively using all senses.
- join a friend.
- tune in to the rhythm of nature and actively try and spot things to look for at the time of year, especially with spring on its way.
- collect items of interest on the way, to bring the joy of the walk home with her.

Claire found these ideas helpful in dealing with her stress.



Find out about our workshops, courses and groups [HERE](#).

'Wellbeing' is feeling more than just happy and confident, it means feeling able to cope when things get tough in our lives or when our physical health suffers.

The wellbeing project aims to provide information and understanding of some of the small steps you can take to help improve and maintain your general wellbeing through workshops, personalised wellbeing plans, taster sessions, Support & Social groups and volunteering opportunities.

- 821 participants over 2 years
- 171 wellbeing plans in year 2 (36% of people accessing Well Being support)
- 551 attendances at wellbeing workshops
- 787 attendances at Peer Support groups



**“ It was brilliant having the chance to speak with you yesterday, thank you both so much for being so open, positive and understanding, and for creating such a positive atmosphere, I felt very understood and heard by you both. ”**

# Social Prescribing

The Social Prescribing team has grown over the past year to meet the demand for the service and help with the implementation of pilots and projects across areas of South Gloucestershire. Between 1 April 2020 and 30 June 2021 they have supported 2,806 people. There are currently 12 Social Prescribing Link Workers (SPLW) working across the 5 Primary Care Networks in South Gloucestershire and the work is delivered in partnership with Developing Health and Independence. For the duration, the team have been working remotely and offering support predominantly over the phone mostly.

SPLW have managed to maintain low waiting times and usually contact the participant within 5-10 working days to have an initial discussion and book a future appointment.

Support could look like this:

- Brief Support: Signpost and follow up phone call to assess progress.
- Medium support: 2-4 appointments and review if further appointments required.
- Intensive support – 4-6 appointments (in exceptional circumstances, where there are complex needs, patients may be given 10 appointments.)

**“ I’ve never used a link worker before, the support I’ve received has been fantastic, you’ve really helped point me in the right direction. You’ve really put me at ease. ”**

Mental health and wellbeing have been the headliners, in terms of support. However, as we have progressed through the year the other types of support requested has changed because of shielding and covid restrictions changing – moving from more practical support (eg food, prescription collection etc) and support for carers in the beginning, to social isolation and financial support.

**“ I wasn't aware of the support that was out there and wish I had accessed support earlier. I was nervous of reaching out for help but by someone contacting me and signposting support it felt that there was someone on my side and that it was a 'normal' thing to need help every now and then. It has been invaluable. ”**

The team made over 583 signposts or referrals to different organisations, websites, and services over the year, with the five most common areas being:

- Mental Health and wellbeing
- Statutory Services (including Council services)
- Volunteer Services (e.g., befriending, volunteer led support)
- Practical Support
- Support for Carers

Our relationship with our colleagues in the One You South Gloucestershire wellbeing team were strengthened by nearly 20% (406) of our participants being signposted or referred into the service, making it our most frequently used service.

To find out more about Social Prescribing click [HERE](#).