

Connect

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2022

Issue 5

Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter

Welcome, from our CEO - Alison Findlay

Southern Brooks has been busy over the last 6 months. We've welcomed new colleagues into our social prescribing team, said goodbye to some long-standing employees who have gone on to other opportunities and expanded our health and wellbeing offer.

We're supporting Afghan families who have come to live in South Gloucestershire and helping them settle into their new communities, enrol children in nearby schools and register with their local GP and we continue with our work in local communities enabling people to develop the things they care most about.

There has been a mural project in Patchway, a

Jubilee event in Yate and henna painting and bunting making in Kingswood.

We know people in all communities are finding the rising cost of living increasingly difficult, so demand on our services, and those of other local organisations, is increasing. And this follows such a challenging time with Covid 19 and lockdowns.

Providing opportunities for people to reconnect is much of our work both for ourselves at work and for those we are here to serve in South Gloucestershire.

Our teams remain experienced, energetic and enthusiastic. They are our greatest asset!



Alison

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In Focus: Afghan Family Project

Family Arman came to the UK in September 2021, following the chaos created after the US and UK military forces moved out of Afghanistan. They were one of the lucky few to get out and escape to safety, with just a suitcase of clothes and very little else. The father had worked as a chef in the canteen of one of the UK military bases, placing him and his family at risk of attack by the Taliban.

They left behind close family members and other relatives that they have tried to keep in touch with, and they have made some friends with some of the other families that have moved and were accommodated temporarily in hotels. This family was grateful to be given the opportunity to move and settle in a property in South Gloucestershire. They have appreciated the support they have received from Southern Brooks and are trying hard to overcome the challenges they are still feeling.

The father speaks basic English and is attending classes to improve so he can get a job and provide for his family. The mother is struggling with depression and anxiety caused by the trauma of circumstances in Afghanistan, leaving behind family and friends, and the isolation resulting from not wanting to go out. She is fearful of things such as harassment, unfamiliar environment and transport, and not speaking or understanding English. Adjusting to a new way of life in a new community, a new city, a new country and a new culture, is not easy.

The children have also been adjusting and are dealing with trauma and changes. Anger, fear, tantrums, and health issues are common, as they try and make sense of the experiences they have had and their new environment.

The priority for the support provided started with meeting basic needs such as food, clothing, a safe place to live, as the first steps, alongside health, employment, schools, learning English, and slowly moving towards independence as the family becomes more settled and able to be a part of their local community.



Local volunteers helping to set up a house ready to welcome a family.

We have seen a huge amount of generosity from the South Gloucestershire community towards these families. Donations of clothes, money, household items and sewing machines, and people volunteering to build flat pack furniture. Neighbours on the streets have been kind and welcoming. It's been heart-warming to be part of this community response.

Investing in future generations

We have an excellent, mutually supportive relationship with SGS College. Last year their Business students raised just over £1,600 for us as part of their 'running events' module. This year's students have surpassed this, with more money coming in all the time.

We recently supported Marketing students to 'pitch' to us, as part of their 'digital media' module, on how using this more effectively could help us raise much needed funds. Their pitches were incredible, and we now have a large pool of knowledge just waiting to be actioned. What impressed us most was the number of students that were already employable – an incredible group of students!



Arts students designed 'thank you/Merry Christmas' cards for us and another group has just pitched their 'outdoor art' designs to Orchard surgery. We look forward to seeing the winning art in place!



Lastly, we supported some very nervous students to practice their interview techniques. We pretended to be very different organisations, in line with their chosen job role. Some had prepared well, others were very nervous – but as soon as we got them talking about things that interested them, they really stepped up a gear.

After each interview we fed back about the things they did well and left them with top tips for future interviews.

Hopefully they'll be applying to us for jobs in the very near future!

Social Prescribing

Social prescribing continues to provide one-to-one support to people based on 'what matters to them' and is delivered in partnership with Developing Health and Independence. Our team of 12 Link Workers are based in GP surgeries across South Gloucestershire.

Link Workers have seen an increased demand in the service this year with 2452 people receiving support between 1st April 2021 and 31st March 2022. Despite the increased demand, outcome measures show that the team are providing a good service. In the last quarter, 100% of people who completed the service either maintained their level of wellbeing or saw an improvement in at least one of the 4 areas we measure (feeling that life is worthwhile, feeling satisfied with life, happiness, anxiety).



There has been a large shift from working with people over the phone during COVID-19 to offering support within a person's local community or at home.

Support looks different depending on a person's needs:

- Brief Support: Signposting and follow up to assess progress.
- Medium Support: 2 – 4 appointments, either in person or over the phone with a review of future appointments if necessary.
- Intensive Support: 4-6 appointments though under exceptional circumstances and in supporting complex needs can be extended further.

We have seen an increased use of local community groups and services as COVID-19 restrictions ease and activity restarts, but mental Health and wellbeing remain the main area for signposting and referral.

One You South Gloucestershire continues to be the most used service by Link Workers thanks, in part, to the smooth internal referral process that means patients can access support quickly.

Social Prescribing

Other areas of support provided are:

- Local neighbourhood groups
- Statutory services, including Council services
- Volunteer services, including befriending
- Money and welfare
- Physical activity

This year has seen us collaborate with Second Step on the Mental Health Recovery Navigation project in two Primary Care Networks, which aims to support people who fall through the gap between primary and secondary care.



“ It has enabled me to get the mental health support I need as the waiting list for [other services] was so long.

I have only just started working with Second Step Recovery Navigators but feel very supported already, as the social prescriber was able to arrange for me to meet the team before starting the support.

Thank you for your supporting letter to my immigration officer which will be very useful in my case.”

Patchway Rail Project

Our Patchway Community Development Coordinator, Katie Hanning, was recently involved in this art project that was commissioned by Severnside Rail Partnership for Patchway Train Station.

Members of the Patchway Memory Café and families from Coniston Primary School in Patchway had their hands photographed whilst spelling out letters using the BSL alphabet.

Their creations depict the phrases 'the future is in our hands' and 'together we are stronger'. These letters are displayed on railings on each of the platforms at Patchway train station.

The different hands reflect the diversity of the Patchway community, while the choice of phrases reflect a shared responsibility at making a better future for our communities and our planet, reminding us of the possibilities when we come together to do so.



ONE YOU SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE

As a single parent and carer for her own parents, Gail* often found herself feeling anxious and stressed and not having enough time for herself. Gail hoped that a wellbeing plan could help tackle her feelings of stress.

Talking with a Wellbeing Coach helped Gail to identify mindfulness techniques that she had used before and ways to incorporate these into her week. They developed a personalised wellbeing plan that would help Gail cope through the winter:

- Taking 10 minutes for herself after the school run
- Taking opportunities to do activities outside
- Movie nights with her son
- Batch cooking meals for the week
- Connecting with her friendship network

After working with the Wellbeing Coach, Gail felt happier, less anxious, and could let go of the things she cannot change. Gail felt she knew what she needed to do to look after herself and had more space for fun and laughter.

“ The women's group feels like a safe space in which to learn and share thoughts. It helps vulnerable individuals such as myself feel less isolated. It is a very positive and beneficial space. Thank you so much. ”

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

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, and social groups.

From 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022:

- 233 wellbeing workshops
- 715 attendances
- 188 people developed personalised wellbeing plans
- 70% of people said they had reduced anxiety
- 733 peer support attendances



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

South Glos Wellbeing Network

Since April 2021, Southern Brooks has been the lead locality partner in South Gloucestershire for the voluntary and community (VCSE) sector working with partner organisations from health, South Gloucestershire Council and other VCSE organisations to contribute to integrating health services.

Aims include health services being more accessible to people in their communities at the time they need them and promoting best practice in working together to better join up care for all of our communities.

As part of this we have had an

inaugural meeting of the South Glos Wellbeing Network that will help to promote prevention and early intervention and the wider determinants of health.

There will be more network meetings coming up to discuss progress and the role of VCSE organisations in delivering the vision.

More information about integrating health can be found here <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/audio-video/how-does-nhs-in-england-work> and below is a diagram demonstrating the factors affecting health.



Coniston Reading Bus – Intergenerational Art Project.

Coniston Primary's reading bus, that had been donated to the school by First Bus, lives permanently in the playground at the school and offers a space for children to sit and read during school hours. In 2020 the bus was unfortunately vandalized, with all the windows smashed and dozens of books and board games strewn across the playground.



At the time, Headteacher Alan Walter said he was "devastated" by the "mindless act" but highlighted his respect for one teenager who came forward to him and the school and admitted he took part.

"I reported it to the police and the community have come together and have helped clean it up. One of the teenagers has even come forward and admitted it was them."

The news prompted parents to set up a crowdfunding page, which has raised

more than £700 in less than two days and thanks to the school and the local community, the bus was clean up and fixed – however Alan was looking to take it one step further and give the bus a new lease of life with a paint job.

Southern Brooks was able to help them achieve this, with the help of artist Sophie Rae, who helped run workshops with local residents using collage to design elements of what the overall look of the bus would look like.

She then worked with street artist Ollie Gallad (aka Gage) over two lovely sunny days to create the stunning mural that was much more than just a paint job!



Could you be a Friend of Southern Brooks?

This newsletter highlights how Southern Brooks makes a difference in communities through the wide-ranging work it does. However, we are dependent on funding to do this.

Most of our funding comes from contracts and commissions or grant giving organisations, focussing on specific projects. But a proportion of our money comes from people like yourselves, either donating in a personal or professional capacity.

This money is critical to us as it allows us to shape the business to the needs of communities in South Glos. As well as core functions, we can spend it where it will make the most difference, rather than being tied to activities set in an earlier agreement or contract.

Could you be a Friend of Southern Brooks and support us in this way? At the risk of sounding like a well-known supermarket advert, every little counts. It soon adds up!



If you would like to explore any of these options in more detail, please email Jen on jennyvernon@southernbrooks.org.uk or ring them on 07817 089576. We'll make sure you're kept informed about how we spend this money. All support is very much appreciated!

How could you help?

- Make an occasional 'one-off' donation to us, using the 'donate' button on the front of our web site
- Sponsor our annual fundraiser (usually held in September)
- Organise your own fundraiser, either personally – or encourage your workplace to organise one
- Encourage your workplace to make us their 'charity of the year'
- Talk to us about sponsoring an area of work that interests you eg volunteering, digital marketing, social cohesion, employing young people

Or our top tip ...

Make a regular monthly donation, using our 'donate' button on our web site. £10 (less than the cost of a latte a week) or more on a regular basis (you can stop any time) would really help us with planning what we need to do to ensure we make the best use of our money in support of communities