

Annual Report 2021-2022



SOUTHERN BROOKS

connect support thrive



Welcome from our Chair

In January 2021, the Board appointed CEO, Alison Findlay. This is a new, exciting era for the charity, which has supported residents of South Gloucestershire throughout the pandemic, with staff adapting willingly to new tasks and new ways of working.

During Covid, Alison and her new Leadership Team worked hard to adapt, continuing to work alongside South Gloucestershire Council to support local communities and mutual aid groups and providing online support for all our projects. Staff developed a hybrid working model that allowed employees to reconnect online, allowing a popular flexible approach which we are continuing.

For the Board, 2021 took our meetings online, but we continued to meet regularly.

In January 2022, the Board returned to an Annual Strategy Day, held with the Leadership Team in the offices of local firm, Hoare Lea. Their IT

department ensured that the new 'blended meeting was a great success, enabling us to include external speakers, Nigel Riglar, Director of Environment and Community Services, South Gloucestershire Council and Ruth Thomas, Delivery Director, South Gloucestershire Locality Partnership as well as those Board members self-isolating.

At the meeting, we refreshed our Three-Year Plan, which is clearly focussed on our core areas of work - Sustainable Communities and Health and Wellbeing, whilst emphasising integrating all our work. It also commits to enhancing staff welfare and developing a proactive and innovative Climate Change Policy.

At the beginning of 2022 we appointed two new Trustees; local GP, Karen Rochester and local engineer, Phil Grew.

Jules Moore
Chair of Trustees



CEO Report

During 2021-22 Southern Brooks continued to feel the impact of the pandemic both internally with our teams and externally in the communities we serve, but despite that we continued to thrive as an organisation. Our people have been resilient, tenacious and creative, using their extensive skills, experience and expertise to provide empathetic support to people across South Gloucestershire. To look after them, we have introduced a new, comprehensive employee wellbeing support package.

We have worked hard to integrate our offer, to deliver to high standards and use the wider South Gloucestershire offer to support people into activities and find extra support when and where they need to. We have made some key decisions that build on our strengths and this has led to what you see now: our ability to confidently articulate what we do well. Our new logo with our strapline helps us tell the story of Southern Brooks – from connection, through support to thriving people in thriving communities.

Our Health and Wellbeing teams have gone from strength to strength; we have maintained our One You South Glos

Wellbeing offer, so people are coached in making sustainable changes in their lives, and we've seen growth in social prescribing. The model is proving to be successful and we're now adapting it to work with particular groups - from physical activity to hospital discharge.

Our Sustainable Communities teams continue to work closely in Priority Neighbourhoods to support local communities build on their strengths. In response to world events we started supporting Afghan families who have come to the UK through the resettlement scheme and more recently have been working with Ukrainian guests to make sure they can access local community groups and networks.

Southern Brooks is a core member of the South Gloucestershire Locality Partnership and the Keep it Local group. Our commitment as the VCS lead locality partner for health and wellbeing to sector and cross-sector development in South Gloucestershire and beyond is strong. We believe in the power of partnerships and we endeavour to live out our values.

Alison Findlay
C.E.O.



Afghan Family Support



5 families of people employed by the UK military in Afghanistan supported to settle in South Gloucestershire.

Last August 2021, South Gloucestershire Council (SGC) invited Southern Brooks to commit to supporting Afghan families who had been working with the UK military in Afghanistan, and that the Government had relocated to the UK. We accepted the invitation and since then, supported by LA and Government funding, Southern Brooks staff have worked swiftly and collaboratively with SGC colleagues and a team of trusted volunteers, to make this happen in what is a rapidly evolving and changing landscape.

Our caseworkers helped the families understand their new lives, including local

orientation, understanding local shops, community centres and using public transport.

Support was given to find work via the usual routes available to everyone, learn English, and generally integrate into their community. Language support is provided as most of the families have limited English.

The women feel particularly vulnerable and isolated from family and friends they have left behind, so the caseworkers work closely with them to identify appropriate provision to help them to build connections in their local communities.



Business Development

The brilliant BTEC foundation Diploma in Business Level 3 students from SGS College held raffles, did charity walks, ran a T-shirt competition, boxing tournament, gaming and movie nights in order to raise a whopping £1,180 towards our Retreat Memory Café and The Patch youth club as part of their events module this year.

We also supported 25 students with interview practice. These young people are our future and anything we can do to support this is a worthwhile investment of our time.

we have had support from many other companies, clubs and individuals, helping us raise £16,355 – some of which has been spent on supporting our dementia café, youth club and providing 85 Christmas parcels to families.

Thanks to these organisations and many others who have helped us make a difference this year.



**BROADMEAD
BAPTIST CHURCH**



sgs South Gloucestershire
and Stroud College

Community Aid

- 8 Food Alliance meetings attended by 13 groups.
- 33 Food Hygiene courses completed.



We continued to support community aid groups as the lockdowns and furlough came to an end. One of the problems faced by the Community Aid Groups (CAGs) was that groups were sometimes taking on supporting someone who's needs they could not meet and that they felt unable to turn people away without arranging alternative support for them that they were happy with.

The groups were concerned that there were many people who fell through the gap.

CAGs didn't understand the role of adult social care and what the alternative services of support might be and so we arranged training to give groups the confidence to help people access appropriate services and to help themselves, even when they believe they can't.

Together we created a guide to outline the thresholds for receiving care from different services.



Community Cohesion



Two meetings with Faith organisations to form a South Gloucestershire Multi Faith Forum.



4 Equality, Diversity and Unconscious Bias sessions run for VCSE groups.

The Community Cohesion steering group has set up South Gloucestershire Multi Faith Forum, offering training for VCSE groups on Equality, Diversity and Unconscious Bias and on internet safety for young people.



“ I think that I could do with more training on this matter as I am enlightened by a lot of what was spoken about today. It certainly made me think more deeply about how I come across and I’d like to improve my stance in anyway I can. ”

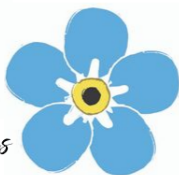
“ Excellent delivery, good content and nice mix of info, exercises, breakout rooms, images, examples, discussion. ”

“ The slides were all very clear in the presentation. The video on microaggressions was good. ”

“ It was helpful to break away in smaller groups to have some conversations on our experiences and thoughts. ”

Dementia

South Gloucestershire
Dementia Friendly Communities



Dementia Friends Sessions continued throughout the pandemic:

- 93 dementia friends created from 13 public sessions delivered online.
- 165 dementia friends created from 6 online privately requested sessions by local businesses and groups.
- 118 Dementia friends created from 7 face to face sessions in South Gloucestershire which resumed in September 2021.

Following lockdowns, we delivered a community event for 60 persons to raise awareness of South Glos Dementia Friendly Communities and the benefit of memory cafes to alleviate loneliness.

We also continued to create and distribute quarterly newsletters to 200+ contacts.



The Retreat Memory Café reopened in September 2021 with an additional two volunteers to join the team of five, after being closed throughout all lockdown, and again shut for the start of 2022 due to a spike in Covid cases.

Sadly, we lost many of our members to a decline in health over the periods of lockdown, but numbers steadily increased when we reopened.

Since February 2022 the Retreat has continued to meet twice a month at St Stephens Church hall in Soundwell, where members have made friends and enjoy crafts, singing, games, exercise, and conversation.

Members and volunteers all agree it is a vital service, and it is wonderful to see how much everyone gets out of coming along.

EU Settled Status



Over 100 individuals were supported to apply for settled status as a result of Brexit.

We recruited and trained 18 volunteer Community Ambassadors to help people from various countries, including Belgium, Germany, Romania, Spain and Portugal, but also from the outside Europe, such as Australia, Brazil and Thailand apply for settled status.

Approximately 30% of these clients were considered vulnerable due to many different factors and so these more complex clients, whose needs were beyond just applying to the EUSS, were assessed holistically and referred for appropriate support from other organisations.

“ I have many friends from all around the Europe, so I applied to volunteer as a Community Ambassador. I found the thought of any of them, or others, losing their rights in the UK as a result of Brexit very upsetting. I realised that for many, the application process was quite complex.



It has been a rewarding role, achieving something purposeful by supporting others. I gained experience of frontline community support work and received training around safeguarding, confidentiality and advocacy.”

Green Spaces



Our 4 growing groups in Kingswood and Patchway reached 35 members, aged 16-84.

Most members have physical and mental health difficulties, and many of them are socially isolated, but also experience social anxiety which can prevent them from getting involved in their community.

They now grow flowers and food and enjoy a cup of tea on the allotment, and enjoy reconnecting with other local people following the isolation of Covid lockdowns, making friends, and the subsequent informal peer support is helping them face their personal challenges. They have pride in turning wastelands of litter and weed into productive and attractive food gardens. and a sense of creating something

which will help others, is helping to lift participants' self-esteem.

James* hadn't left his flat for weeks. He was so anxious when he first started coming that he could barely speak and started to have a panic attack.

During the weeks that followed, he opened up for the first time about a bereavement, made some new friends, started to seek help with his anxiety. He is looking at starting a mindfulness course and has begun taken on additional responsibilities in his own time at the allotment.

“Coming to the group has helped me start to take steps to rebuild my life, and I'm now getting out and about, and making plans for the future.”

Kingswood

Volunteer Centre & Community Development

460 Kingswood residents joined us to create a community art mural delivered by Bristol Brick Project and we created a huge mandala mural made up of 460 mini mandalas.



In order to engage residents of all ages and abilities, we ran sessions in schools, family groups, clubs and local community spaces taking the mural to them rather than them having to come to us.



Jane* is an older person, living on her own. After one of our conversations, she decided to volunteer at several community events and projects, including being a steward at the Kingswood Jubilee Picnic in Kingswood Park.

“ I really enjoyed my day, meeting so many different people and getting out the house to be part of this special celebration. ”

We also ran a couple of coaching sessions with Bristol Brick Project to help grow their organisation.

“ It really helped us get a bit of clarity on alternative options and we came up with our own answers which felt great. These meetings were extremely useful to us. ”

Older People



19 people connected to local activities or services.



15 people or community groups supported to take action in their community.



46 activities and interventions facilitated.

Souper Natter evolved from a conversation in September 2021 with Turnberries Community Centre in Thornbury. A large local ageing population had been impacted during the Covid pandemic, suffering bereavements and job losses, and Turnberries wanted to create a social space for people to reconnect and build confidence.

Thornbury Job Centre helped to promote the group – alongside an online neighbourhood app - and recruit volunteers to run it.

One volunteer suggested sharing vegetables harvested from her allotment to cook soup with others, and the “Souper Natter” event was born.

Promotional flyer design and distribution was carried out by one volunteer, whilst another - a local sixth form college student - set up a social media page and managed the contacts.

Most of the volunteers are retired or having a career break and they all shared a common passion to give something back to the community and get to know neighbours by offering a social space for people who are lonely or social isolated in Thornbury.

So far 5 events have been held successfully, and volunteers are still working behind the scenes to bring more events to the community.

- 331 referrals
- 56 different types of sessions or workshops provided
- A total of 233 sessions delivered, with 1.323 sign ups
- 47 people accessed our internal counselling service.



Tia* has ME and frequent pain. Her disabilities restrict her from being able to go out of her home and as a result feels isolated and lonely. She also cares for her dad, since losing her mum to cancer recently.

Tia began receiving support from her Wellbeing Coach who signposted her to two online workshops (Tea & Talk and

Meditation). Tia regularly attends these online sessions and as a result has made some good social connections. She finds laughter and fun from connecting with other members which has improved her overall mood.

Tia found that having a routine has been essential for her, and the sessions she attends with the wellbeing service have been an important part of this. Tia really looks forward to the tea and talk sessions and enjoys talking to the members of the group; it helps her to not feel so alone.

“ The online groups are a really great service; I find them very valuable and I hope that they continue because they give me the opportunity to connect with other people. ”

Patchway

Volunteer Centre & Community Development

Southern Brooks worked with Coniston Primary School to help revamp and paint their reading bus, situated in the school grounds which children can visit in their break time to read or have some quiet time.

The bus was sadly vandalised last year, so we worked with Artists Sophie Rae and Ollie Gage, running intergenerational workshops to co-create images and designs that would be painted onto the exterior of the bus.

The artists utilised parts of everyone's ideas to create one big design to paint on the bus, which was well received by the children, teachers and parents. The school even asked Sophie to create some additional murals in their communal areas to brighten up more of the



Over 200 people from the local community came together to celebrate Diwali. The colourful and lively celebration ended in a beautiful parade, featuring over 80 lanterns handmade by local young people in schools and youth groups.

The free, annual event, hosted by The Avon Indian Community Association along with Southern Brooks at Bradley Stoke Leisure centre featured traditional music, dance performances, henna, crafts and a buffet of Indian food.



Patchway, Filton and The Stokes Volunteer Centre continued to find people to fill vacancies in many organisations.

One resident, a refugee, gained a placement in a charity shop in order to build up experience and be able to practice the English language. He has also undertaken a ESL course alongside this placement.

Social Prescribing



2452 referrals
received for patients in
South Gloucestershire



We provided support
to 85% of patients
referred into the
service.

In March 2022 patients reported that Social Prescribing had a positive impact upon their wellbeing with regards to feeling satisfied, worthwhile and happy, and had helped in reducing anxiety levels.

“ It’s taken me out of my depression and helped with meeting other people. It made me feel like a person, not someone written off, that I am here and not alone. ”

Martha* was living with anxiety, chronic pain, and isolation. She was involved with our OYSG Wellbeing Tea and Talk group but wanted to explore other options of support. She wanted to build better face to face social connections that could help to support ongoing with her conditions.

Through Social Prescribing support, Martha was made aware of the Kingsmeadow chronic pain support group and accessed Kingsmeadow telephone befriending service.

She continues to attend the Tea and Talk support group and has reported more awareness of her energy levels and has activities that help with her life balance.

Training



We delivered 5 online and 1 face to face Cygnet courses with 81 parents attending.



47 learners completed a NOCN Accredited Youth Work course

In February 2021, 28 learners started the Level 2 Award in Youth Work Principles and 30 learners started the Level 3 Diploma in Youth Work Practice - of these there were 40 total passes.

Working with DHI, 12 learners started Level 2 in Peer Mentoring, 7 completed the course.

Learners came from a variety of local organisations who work with young people including; Creative Youth Network, Full Circle Project, Learning Partnership West, The Door, Stroud Council, and Young Bristol.

“Southern Brooks gave me a lot of confidence with my practice, it confirmed how to best approach different situations and made me ready to handle anything that would come up... It has also broadened the range of support I can offer to young people and most importantly improved my knowledge of what other help is out there, and I am able to signpost much better.

Professionally, since taking level 2 and 3, I have now been able to advance myself from a part time sessional youth worker to full time, which has been a great and rewarding advancement.

I wanted to become more confident. I feel have achieved this, thanks to your support, course content and feedback.”

West of England Works



By the time our employment support programme finished in November 2021, we had supported 249 residents of South Glos into employment or training.

James* had no qualifications, was unable to read and write, was digitally excluded, and had a large gap in paid employment history. With support of his job coach, he found 2 voluntary positions to build up confidence, work experience and gain references. Together, they found courses to support the James with literacy and numeracy skills, built a CV and uploaded it to jobsites, and applied for jobs.

All this plus great interview prep sessions led to James getting paid employment! He was extremely grateful for support offered by his Job Coach.

Beth* had left mainstream education because of barriers with her mental health & anxiety and was getting support from CAHMS. She was about to take Maths, English and Science assessments with a home tutor and due to Covid-19 restrictions there had been minimal 'next steps' support available.

She met with her job coach weekly, initially building trust and a relationship, and explored next steps options, looking at aspirations and goals. They did many activities together including interview preparation, building resilience and confidence, skills identification and gratitude journaling.

Beth eventually applied to attend a college course and felt much more confident about her future, including her relationships with peers.

Yate

Volunteer Centre & Community Development

250 people attended the Christmas In Abbotswood event.

23 people attended Pebbles in the Park.

74 volunteers were brokered to new opportunities.



Pebbles in the Park was a pop-up, volunteer run event supporting Friends of Kingsgate Park. Park visitors were invited to paint a Christmas themed pebble to go under one of the Christmas trees.

It was a very cold day but all who took part had fun, even though their fingers got a little chilly. Buddy the Christmas Elf even joined us and drew a self-portrait!

Our volunteers are looking forward to a repeat performance this year.

Participants said it was lovely for the community to come back together after the isolation of the pandemic.

We asked our volunteers what makes them want to volunteer. One of the most popular answers is to fill their free time and get out of the house.

John* had a long-term illness which caused him to leave his job of many years. Finding himself in long term unemployment, stuck in a cycle of being referred to various unsuccessful return to work services, he came to Volunteering Yate hoping to build his CV and to also help boost his confidence.

John is now learning new skills in a customer service role and hopes to use this experience to progress to paid work..

Youth Work



65 young people in Patchway came to 74 youth work sessions held at The Patch Youth Centre

Young people started coming back gradually after Covid so they could reconnect with their friends and their community.

They had great fun playing basketball, creatively crafting and playing games.

What young people valued most was the opportunity to hang out together after spending so much time on line and at home!

Our Friday Art Therapy group produced some beautiful

crafts with very meaningful messages.

When sessions returned in the Autumn of 2021, the group got to work making beautiful lanterns which were used in the community Diwali celebrations.



with thanks to:



Bromford.



Trustees 2021-22

Jules Moore, Chair
Margaret Slucutt, Vice Chair
Andy Bell, Treasurer

David Bell
Harry Partington
Paul Timmins

Chris Walker
Karen Rochester
Phil Grew

