

OPAL Newsletter



June 2020

We are working in very unusual times and so our newsletter is considerably different from usual. Whilst the coronavirus situation has created many challenges, it has also provided an opportunity for innovation and change and we are sharing some of our new initiatives here. Before we get started, our Service Manager, Pauline Moffat shares ...

5 things we've learned from lockdown:

- ◆ We have amazing, loyal, caring and committed volunteers
- ◆ We have incredibly resilient clients whose gratitude makes what we do so worthwhile
- ◆ Our staff team are so passionate about the work that we do and continue to ooze enthusiasm despite difficult circumstances
- ◆ We work for a fabulous organisation who do such valuable work with so many people
- ◆ Technology is a wonderful thing



New ways to deliver our service

Total interactions since lockdown began:

1615

Our primary aim has been to continue to connect with our one-to-one and group clients in whatever ways we can, these have included phone calls, online sessions, activity packs in the post, songs from Sandy and deliveries of essential items. There is more detail below about some of these.

Activity Packs

We've been keeping in touch via our Activity Packs which we are posting weekly to 180 people, it is also emailed to our volunteers and can be found on our website. The packs contain quizzes, puzzles, recipes, pictures and useful information.



Embracing technology



We are holding a weekly online and activity group on Wednesdays at 2pm using Zoom. Our first session, on 21st May had 15 participants, including clients, volunteers and staff, taking part in chat, word games and a singalong. We are currently working to enable clients who are less confident using technology to access the group. Anyone who would like to join the group can get in touch by phone or email.

Blether Buddie and Mail Mates

Not everyone wants to use technology, some prefer the telephone or mail through the letterbox. With that in mind we were planning Blether Buddies and Mail Mates to enable our clients to keep in touch with each other directly, and lockdown spurred us into action a little earlier than originally planned. Our first Blether Buddies started at the end of March and we now have 5 active groups running with 12 people in total. 4 Mail Mates are up and running, 3 people receiving letters and 1 person receiving emails from volunteers or staff.



“Today I received a lovely letter from my Mail Mate Mary. I was thrilled when it arrived and saved it to read with my cuppa. I’m so glad she wrote back, I see now how it feels to be a recipient. What a great scheme!”

Joyce, OPAL Volunteer

“Blether buddies is going great, Barbara is a lovely, lovely person and I’ll always want to talk to her, it’s been a great match.”

June, OPAL Client

Mental Health Awareness Training



To mark Mental Health Awareness Week the OPAL team took part in a Mental Health Awareness training session led by our very own June Gilfether. Our first foray into remote learning, using Zoom, was a great success as we not only learned a great deal but also discovered its not so hard to do it in a virtual setting. We will be offering this course to volunteers along with other online sessions very soon.

Music with Sandy

During lockdown Sandy has been surprising some clients with a song down the phone but he took it to a whole new level with a VE Day challenge to sing 75 wartime songs to 75 people, raising funds for Cyrenians too.



Volunteers’ Week: 1st – 7th June

We cannot have a get together with our volunteers as we usually would in Volunteers’ Week but that won’t stop us saying thank you to all the amazing people who make OPAL such a great service. We currently have 83 volunteers, some have been with us quite a few years, others are newer and some, including 9 Cyrenians employees, have joined us to help in the current situation. We have sent a special thank you pack to every volunteer and will be having a Virtual Coffee Morning for our volunteers on Friday 5th June.



The Cyrenians OPAL Staff Team are:

Pauline Moffat - Service Manager
Lorna Bryson - Senior Service Coordinator
Jane McColl - Senior Service Coordinator
Billie Skene - Senior Service Coordinator
Sylvia Forshaw - Administrator and Service Support
Naomi Williams - Service Support Assistant
Sandy Stewart - Groups Support Assistant
Peter MacLeod - Communications and Systems Support Officer
June Gilfether - Groups Support Assistant

Contact us at opal@cyrenians.scot or 01506 815815

www.cyrenians.scot/OPAL
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