

Regional Coordinators Update

Welcome to all the new members who have joined RSVP West during the pandemic.

We hope you will be able to enjoy your chosen activity as soon as possible. Please keep telling your friends and family about RSVP - we know that word-of-mouth is still by far the most effective recruitment method.

We are delighted to confirm that **Mina Malpass** has rejoined Judy Harris' team as our Schools Organiser for Bristol West.

Volunteering News (Newsletter)

The Editor, **Pam Eastley**, pamela.eastley@rsvp-west.org.uk, is always looking for new articles, preferably with a photograph.

Please let Office Coordinator **Hilary Roberts**, office@rsvp-west.org.uk, have the names of people (with their email addresses) who will be happy to be added to the Newsletter External Contacts list.

Finance

In the past year we have seen a significant reduction in our expenditure mainly due to the fall in members' expenses incurred in travelling to meet people. We are grateful for the continued funding from South Gloucestershire and North Somerset Councils, the Medlock Charitable Trust, Clarion Housing Association and the John James Foundation, which ensure an overall break-even result.

Please let me know of any person or organisation that you think might be happy to provide financial support for our activities.

Volunteering Matters (VM) RSVP Steering Group

We are delighted to announce that **Judy Harris** has joined **Paula Johnson** on this important group. They are involved in discussions on the national RSVP Organisers Directory, a new RSVP Organisers Toolkit, the new VM website as well as the development of RSVP nationally.

VM/RSVP Safeguarding Policy

An updated Safeguarding Policy has recently been published and **Ken Dolbear**, ken.dolbear@rsvp-west.org.uk has kindly agreed to be the Coordinator for RSVP West. Ken will be helping our Organisers ensure that all projects are compliant and that we report any incidents of concern.

It will be a great relief to see most of our activities returning to some form of normality this summer, particularly for the most vulnerable people who need our support.

Happy Volunteering!

Bob Maggs

office@rsvp-west.org.uk

RSVP West Regional Coordinator



Surgery Groups

It was with much anticipation and excitement that the Falldon Way Surgery Tea and Talk Group met up again at our new venue. It had been a long gap since we had met, and many of the group had very much missed the monthly event and the friends they had made there. Whilst some of our group were now a little too frail to join us, many others were very eager to return and were also joined by a number of new members. We had over 20 members in attendance.

The new venue is in the heart of Henleaze in Trinity, The United Reform Church. They have a lovely light meeting area, which lends itself nicely to talks, informal chatting or gentle activity. There is an

attractive cafe area, and we were able to serve tea and cakes to our group.

Our first meeting was facilitated by Nicola from the Alive charity. She engaged everyone, members and volunteers alike, with a great mix of singing, reminiscences, some quiz questions and gentle movement. It was a vibrant, chatty atmosphere and we were made very welcome by our community hosts. All our members had big smiles on their faces and are looking forward to getting this group started again and our new venue had a thumbs up.

We are beginning to plan this year's calendar. We hope to have a return from Alive, also a talk on Guide



Dogs and another on how to avoid being scammed are already in the diary. We always have a Christmas lunch and a pre Christmas visit to a Garden Centre to look for gifts. We are looking forward to developing our usual varied programme.

Mina Tanna

Care Home Lay Assessors Scheme

At our last meeting with Bristol City Council in early June they asked RSVP West to restart the lay assessor service in care homes.

We were delighted, as we have long worried about the problems care homes must be facing with post pandemic issues and staff shortage, and the effect these matters must have on the quality of life of the residents.

However, because of staffing shortages in the Quality and Contracts team we work with in the council, most of our future visits will not be with council staff. The council will write to the care homes we are about to visit saying we will be visiting on their behalf and reporting back to them. The Quality and

Contracts team will then send a report to the care home which will include our views, and concerns if there are any, and ask the care home to reply saying what action they are taking to address the issues raised.

Our fantastic volunteers are keen to try out this new way of working for they feel strongly about the need for the council to hear the voices of residents. It remains to be seen how much notice care homes take of the views of volunteers and we aim to re-visit care homes after a three month period to see if they have acted on any promised improvements.

Ken Dolbear and Jan Snook
ken.dolbear@rsvp-west.org.uk

Musical Activities

The good news is that we are slowly inching towards restarting our musical activity sessions. Despite restrictions being eased, resuming our sessions in care homes and extra care sites is complicated. With the help and support of Bristol City Council and Public Health, who both recognise the importance of running these sessions, we are working on making the sessions as safe as possible for our volunteers, the residents and staff.

The very nature of these group activities which include singing, using musical instruments, balloons, ostrich feathers and chair based exercises, means that some things will need to be done differently and some we will have to lose as being too risky, i.e. the balloons and the feathers.

Our volunteers and the groups have really missed these sessions and are keen to get back. Inevitably, some of our volunteers have now moved on to different volunteering roles or family priorities have taken precedence. Two and a half years is a long time since the sessions were last run.

We look forward to the challenges ahead and to bringing back some fun and activities for the residents and volunteers to enjoy.

Jan Snook & Ken Dolbear.
jan.snook@rsvp-west.org.uk

Viewpoint of a Home Care Lay Assessor

In 2019 I started volunteering for RSVP as a Care Homes Lay Assessor and then COVID struck, so when there was an opportunity to volunteer as a Home Care Lay Assessor I decided to give it a go.

What immediately strikes me is that people who receive Home Care are really isolated and sometimes very lonely, so that if their experience of Home Care is poor it has a significant impact on their day to day quality of life. Some of the service users I've spoken to have been angry and frustrated because they don't have the capacity to change their situation. Of course the flip side to that is if they get

a good service, in addition to getting the practical help they need, they feel respected and have some genuine companionship - however brief.

I feel this is very different from care home residents, where at least there are other people around all the time - both residents and staff - so whilst loneliness and isolation are obviously still an issue, it's not as acute as for those living in their own homes.

It hadn't occurred to me before volunteering that for some the Home Care visits provide respite for the live-in relations of service users - often sons or daughters who have to care for their

parents 24/7, and for whom the Home Care service gives a brief window when they can leave the house and have some independence.

So far I've been very impressed with Bristol City Council's response to our reports - it's clear that they really value the work which we're doing, and that it provides significant help for them when carrying out their quality assessment of different service providers.

I can't say the work is enjoyable, but it's eye-opening and thought provoking, so I hope to continue.

Ruth Hecht

Knitting Group

Our loyal band of knitters have been very busy clicking away. At the beginning of the conflict we managed to send three large bags of blankets and children's clothes to Ukraine via a contact in Poland.

We have also sent similar bags to refugees and needy people in Bristol.

My joint coordinator, Judith Cains, and I work as a team. I am less mobile these days so Judith does the leg work, meets the volunteers and brings their beautiful knitted items to me for distribution.

We are always looking for new volunteers to join us.

Shirley Stark
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Joint Knitting Co-ordinator

Funding Through Shopping

If you use Amazon, we would appreciate it if you could designate our local charity '**Friends of RSVP West Region**' to receive 0.5% of the value of your purchases via www.smile.amazon.co.uk.

Update from Schools Programme

Our school volunteers are now gradually returning, and many host schools are once again 'open for volunteering business'. We're hopeful that, Covid-willing, most volunteers will be back with their feet under the (usually rather small!) school desk in the autumn. All returners are operating within Covid risk management practices, in discussion with their host school.

At the end of May, we were delighted to host a 'coffee and cakes' networking event in Bristol City Centre for around 30 school volunteers from Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. This enabled us to meet again in person, to welcome new volunteers, to compare notes on supporting reading and numeracy in schools,

and to discuss our pandemic experiences. The event doubled as an early Queen's Platinum Jubilee Celebration, generously sponsored by the John James Foundation. Her Majesty, who has no doubt spent much time reading with her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, was duly toasted in coffee/tea! A similar networking event will be held on 30 June for school volunteers in Bath and North East Somerset.

We are immensely grateful to all our existing volunteers but would also like to broaden the profile of people volunteering in schools, particularly with regard to gender and ethnic diversity. So, if anyone has ideas for recruiting more men and/or ethnically diverse school volunteers, please let us know (email address below). Also,



if you know anyone in these groups whom you think might be interested, do encourage them to join us or to find out more via the RSVP website.

Finally, the schools' team is delighted to welcome back Mina Malpass in her role as schools' organiser for West Bristol!

Judy Harris
judy.harris@rsvp-west.org.uk
**Schools Development
 Organiser**



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