

Welcome to our latest newsletter!

We hope you enjoy reading about the latest news from our projects. This edition also features our recent **celebration event**.

RSVP West's June 7 Celebration Event

ABOUT 70 of us gathered on the afternoon of June 7 for an enjoyable celebration event at St George's Bar and Café, Bristol.

The event was held to celebrate and thank our volunteers and also coincided with National Volunteers Week and Age Without Limits Day.

It was great to meet so many fellow volunteers across all our projects.

Mike Ashworth, our Regional Coordinator, hosted the event.

We opened the afternoon with a picture quiz that required volunteers to identify a group of famous faces and then link each one to a charity. All of the famous faces were



Heads together: figuring out the faces in the picture quiz

over 50, like all of us. We then heard from some inspiring speakers – **Rebekah Sharpe**, our new delivery lead from

Volunteering Matters, our national parent organisation, spoke about RSVP West and our positive relationship. **Kate Marsh**, head teacher from Perry Court Primary School, spoke enthusiastically and shared testimonials from pupils about how much they valued the support of Jon Mulkern, a school volunteer. Finally, **Julie Mcfadden**, HealthWest Primary Care Network Manager, shared with us how much RSVP Surgery



Speakers (l-r): Rebekah Sharpe, Kate Marsh and Julie Mcfadden

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Enthusiastic volunteers take part in a taste of Tai Chi led by Mina Malpass

befrienders and drivers are valued.

After refreshments, volunteers were able to engage in a very enjoyable taste of Tai Chi led by Mina Malpass. This proved to be very popular!

Next Mike presented long service certificates to those of our long service volunteers, with 15 or more years with RSVP West, who were in attendance (see pictures below).

We congratulate them and all the others who were not able to attend on the day:

Mike Sams, Ann May, Adrian Sisman, Lottie Enser, Roy Cheater, Rodney North, Colin Campbell, John Saunders, Sonia Hinam, Jenny Campbell, Margaret Leimdorfer, Carol Vernon, John Hayter, David Steele, Mary Bendell, Michael Bravery, Sara Willmott, Sonia Mitchell, Alison Luker, Gordon Fenner, Michael and Margaret Harris.

Receiving their long service certificates from Mike Ashworth...



Bryan Baker



Judith Cains



John Durant



Royston Griffey



Anne Marie Holland



Brenda Simmons



Jan Snook

(RSVP volunteer **Julie Parry**, not pictured, was also presented with her long service certificate.)



Volunteers try out the circus skills shown them by CircoMedia

Our final activity was an exciting display of a wide range of circus skills from CircoMedia, followed by a

chance for volunteers to try all these skills out. This was also extremely enjoyable and popular.

MANY THANKS
to all our session contributors, event organisers and all volunteers attending for making it such a great event.

PAM EASTLEY
Schools Organiser

Fallodon Way Surgery

Tea and Talk Group, Volunteer Drivers Group, Befriender Group

THE VOLUNTEERS met up for a lunch meeting at the Trinity – Henleaze United Reformed Church – to discuss how the scheme is working and how things could be improved.

Over our lovely lunch Penny Lewis, Surgery Organiser, gave an update including information on how other surgeries were running their schemes.

It was a good opportunity for the volunteers to meet up to discuss their role and share experiences whilst addressing the following with the surgery representative:

- **Recruitment of more volunteers;**
- **Improving the process for assigning the volunteer drivers;**
- **Reporting Patient welfare.**

Remap – John Durant gave details of this very worthy charity which he has been involved with for a number of years. They are a charity



Working lunch: volunteers discuss the scheme

who provide custom-made equipment for disabled people and John gave some examples of how their work has made a difference to people's lives – see <https://remap.org.uk/> for more information.

MINA TANNA
Surgery Organiser



Radio Bristol interviews

From left, Mike Ashworth, John Darvall and Jacques Hann in the BBC Radio Bristol studio

WE RECENTLY had a great opportunity to spread the word about RSVP West when I was invited to appear (twice) on BBC Radio Bristol. First, I talked briefly to presenter Joe Lemer by phone on his Good Friday morning show about the work of RSVP West.

Then a few weeks later I went into the studio with **Jacques Hann**, one of our GP Surgery volunteers, to talk at greater length with presenter John Darvall on his regular morning show. John's focus was on what motivates us as individual volunteers, and what we think the benefits are for volunteers and the people we help.

Jacques did a great job conveying his enthusiasm for his role as a 'befriender' for a local GP Surgery. Both interviews were a real opportunity to get the message out about our projects, how much we appreciate our amazing volunteers, the benefits of volunteering as an older person, and just how rewarding volunteering for RSVP West can be for everyone involved.

Hopefully some listeners may have been

encouraged to volunteer with RSVP West.

As an unexpected bonus, Jacques and I actually enjoyed the experience. Jacques said afterwards: "BBC Radio Bristol made the preparation and the live interview easy.

"Twelve minutes of live radio seemed like a long time but because of the informal nature of the programme the minutes raced by. It was good to get messages across to listeners of why we enjoy volunteering as well as talking about the aims of our charity.

"Friends, who heard us on the radio, told me that they could appreciate the value of RSVP's work and that being involved with the charity is very positive. I think that having Mike represent the charity along with a volunteer was a good idea."

You can perhaps see from the photo of us in the studio after the interview that Jacques and I enjoyed ourselves – though a friend kindly commented that the photo proves I have ‘a great face for radio’!

MIKE ASHWORTH

Lay Assessors Project

THE LAY ASSESSOR (LA) Scheme for Care Homes for Older People has restarted. It operated prior to the Covid pandemic but had to stop in early 2020.

The two previous Organisers have retired leaving a very sound legacy. Pat and I have succeeded them. As a result of publicity six new Lay Assessors have been recruited, trained, and are now working.

Two other LAs engaged previously are continuing making a workforce of ten. To date we've visited 14 Bristol Care Homes to examine the Quality of Life for those living there. We work closely with the Adult Commissioning Team of Bristol City Council to whom we report with findings and suggestions for improved care.

Dawn Lloyd, Quality Assurance Deputy Manager of the City sent the following statement:

"The Quality Assurance Team at Bristol City Council are very pleased that the Lay Assessors are involved again with carrying out Quality of Life visits to care Homes. We are fortunate to have a group of very



Ian Tennant and Pat Taylor

experienced and knowledgeable Lay Assessors who each have a relevant background. The visits and findings of the Lay Assessors enhance the Quality Assurance carried out by the Council enabling the process to be much richer."

As Organisers we greatly value our solid working relationship with our City Council colleagues.

PAT TAYLOR and IAN TENNANT

Joint Care Home Lay Organisers

Schools update | Training Session, June 10 2025

IN JUNE, we welcomed 11 new school volunteers to a training session at the John Wesley Centre, Broadmead.

Frances Roberts, our Schools Trainer, got the ball rolling with guidance on the role of a reading buddy in the context of a busy school and outlined tips for making one-to-one reading sessions useful and enjoyable. She also described various resources, eg quiz books, non-fiction books and card games that volunteers could draw on, especially if a

child finds it difficult to engage with more conventional story books. **Paula Johnson**, our Safeguarding Lead, ran a thought-provoking, interactive session on safeguarding in schools and child protection.

We were delighted to be joined by **Catherine Brennan** from Better Bilingual who talked about the organisation's work in supporting children for whom English is not their first language, which can sometimes be the case for children who read with RSVP volunteers.

Feedback on the event from attendees was very positive.

Julia Smith, a school volunteer from South Gloucestershire, wrote: "The venue was central, convenient, easy to find and

very welcoming. The 2.5 hour duration of the training session was just the right time frame. The content was informative, helpful, useful and relevant. It was nice to feel part of a larger 'community volunteering organisation'. Another volunteer from Bristol commented: "I thought the morning was really useful and I took a lot from it".

■ Part of the session was attended by Mike Ashworth, our Regional Coordinator, who welcomed the opportunity to meet new volunteers and emphasised the value of their input to the community.

JUDY HARRIS

Schools Scheme Coordinator



Regional Coordinator's First Impressions

IT HAS BEEN a busy and rewarding time since I started as Regional Coordinator in January. Thanks to everyone who has made me feel so welcome.

I have greatly enjoyed meeting so many of our volunteers at training sessions and network meetings. I have been particularly pleased to see the re-start of our residential care home lay assessor project, where several newly-recruited RSVP volunteers are providing Bristol City Council with an independent view of the quality of life for elderly residents in Bristol care homes.

Our fantastic Celebration Event at St George's Bristol in June was the definite highlight of my first few months, and I'd particularly like to thank the organising team of **Sylvia Carpenter, Pam Eastley, Hilary Roberts, Sue Silvey and Jo Underwood**.

Our volunteers are the lifeblood of RSVP West – which is why we had the June Celebration. But as a small volunteering charity, we are also greatly dependent on the small group of people – all volunteers themselves – who serve as our Trustees, volunteer organisers, and look after the administration in our office at the Create Centre. We can always use more help with running the organisation and making sure our volunteers have a rewarding and positive experience helping the communities we serve. So please do



Lunch event for Mina Malpass, third from the right, with some RSVP colleagues



Mike with (l-r) Pam, Sylvia, Judy and Hilary

get in touch by emailing regionalcoordinator@rspv-west.org.uk if you think you could spare some time now or in the future to help in any capacity – with office administration, communications, maintaining our website; as a school or GP surgery volunteer organiser; or as a Trustee, helping to oversee the work, finances and future direction of RSVP West, and perhaps bringing some skills eg around fundraising or recruitment, or knowledge of the sectors in which we work ie education, health and social care.

Talking of the people who help keep RSVP West running, I wanted to end by expressing our gratitude to long-serving schools organiser **Mina Malpass**, who has let us know that she will be stepping down to focus on her 'other' role as Chair of Age UK Bristol. Mina has been a great supporter of RSVP West and its volunteers and will be sorely missed, though we will keep in touch through our continuing positive relationship with Age UK. Also it opens up an opportunity for someone – perhaps one of our existing school volunteers – to step forward as a new schools organiser! Please email schools@rspv-west.org.uk if that could be you.

MIKE ASHWORTH

Regional Coordinator

Many thanks to all our contributors and particular thanks to Paul Higgins for the Celebration event photos, to Andrew Buchanan for designing this newsletter and to Tim Davies for his editorial assistance