



## Welcome!

*Hello, I'm Susie. I have been a member of Guideposts' social group, Better Connected, for just over a year.*

*Prior to joining I was very isolated and alone. I have enjoyed getting to know the other members in the online groups, and I also enjoy meeting up with them once in a while face to face.*

*This give me an opportunity to practice my conversational skills as this can be difficult at times because of my autism and paranoid schizophrenia - meaning I can get sensory overload at times and shut down and I can be withdrawn sometimes.*

*At first I was very afraid and anxious but now I am able, with planning, to attend meet ups in person. I feel more confident as I have made connections and this has helped my mental health.*

*I feel I have friends now and belong to a community.*

Thank you for your support.

**Together we change people's lives.**

Our vital work is only made possible thanks to your generosity.

If you are able to help, please complete the enclosed donation form, donate online, or contact us directly.

**Thank you for your continued support.**

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# Latest News



## Active Summer Benefits All

**It's been kicking off at Guideposts, in unexpected ways!**

Sports have an amazing way of bringing people together and fostering inclusion. So, inspired by the season to be outdoors as well as the sporting events of the summer, our services embraced the enthusiasm to get active. But the sport has to be right and it has to adapt to the needs that our service members have.

Our groups have explored some unusual sports including the latest craze, foot-golf: a fun new sport suitable for all ability levels.

We partnered with local enterprise Wheels For All in Oxfordshire providing specialist bikes, and Gloucester RFC supported us by hosting rugby sessions for our Gloucestershire members.

Staying physically active is a key part of the support we provide and it has so many benefits, from obvious physical benefits to mental health and making friends. As one member put it,

***"We might not be the best sports-people in the world, but we have fun and laugh together, trying!"***

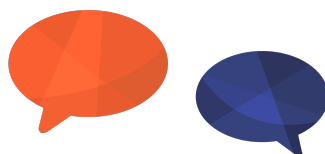
In Hertfordshire, one of our members requested starting a Women's Gym Group recently, so we started it up.

Sophie explains "One of my symptoms is a sort of paralysis where I sometimes can't move for a whole day, so exercise can be very hard for me, even though I enjoy it.



It helps to exercise especially if you're on medication like anti-psychotics. They can make you gain weight easily and sometimes you get more tired so having the group is good motivation.

We all know what it's like to have a mental health problem, so we can understand how each other are feeling."



## Knitting Kindness

We have many regular knitters in Guideposts, who are, in many ways, quietly changing the world.

One expert knitter in our Oxfordshire day services gets his wool out whenever he has a spare moment. He has knitted over 100 blankets for sick and premature babies at the John Radcliffe Hospital.



***"It makes me feel less anxious."***

Meanwhile our CONNECT groups are knitting blankets for a very demanding client - orphaned baby rhinos!

One member, Kath's keen to learn too, but had had disheartening previous attempts. With the help of her CONNECT group, she has overcome the difficulties and now says her main comfort is her knitting.



***"It has been wonderful to create beautiful things together, knowing we're making a difference to these little ones."***



# Never Seen, Never Been

Life-changing experiences for people with learning disabilities

We are extremely grateful for the generosity of our supporters, on the launch of our Never Seen, Never Been campaign. Thank you for your support.

**£13,920** amount raised to date

**£20,000** target for 2023-24

There is a real need for people with disabilities to experience things, that many of us take for granted. To step away and see the world from a different perspective is almost a universal need. Whether a day trip to the seaside, a weekend away, or just to see somewhere new.

Life for people with learning disabilities is often built of the same experiences day in, day out, but we can add the extra experiences that make a person's life fulfilling.

This year we have been exploring the aspirations of our members, and the wider community, with learning disabilities.



We have arranged trips to the seaside, zoos, boat trips and activity days, that have been received with a real appetite, and made a big difference to people's mental health.

With your help, we are looking forward to making more of their dreams possible.

In the coming months, we are delighted to be able to arrange Christmas market and theatre trips that will be affordable to all.

The Learning Disability Community tell us:

**68%** had never been to a music festival

**54%** had never been to a sports event

**52%** had never been on a steam train

What are the barriers?

**72%** would need a carer to travel with them

**68%** said that a trip was too expensive for them

**58%** felt too anxious or unsafe to go

**52%** said they had no-one to go with

What is the solution?

**81%** said that supported, organised groups would make trips easier for them



## Help us make it happen

For 2024 we are planning further adventurous day trips and longer breaks. The people we support have said they would particularly like to join up with Guideposts groups from the other counties, so we would like to arrange combined a day trip to London.

This would involve groups from each of Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire and Hertfordshire travelling into London, to see an accessible show in the West End, and take a sightseeing tour of London together, as well as time to socialise over a meal.

If you would like to contribute to making this trip happen, please visit [www.guideposts.org.uk/never-seen-never-been](http://www.guideposts.org.uk/never-seen-never-been) or contact us.

✉ [fundraising@guideposts.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@guideposts.org.uk)

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# Meet Anthony



I was originally attracted to working on the Better Connected programme because of its combination of using tech for the online social groups, together with arts & crafts for therapeutic activities, and using creative and technical skills to create a monthly magazine. This is still an exciting mix, and makes it an incredibly rewarding role. But there is so much more.

When I started working with Guideposts Better Connected, I saw there would be some overlap with what I had learnt previously, in providing therapeutic activities for the elderly, with this service for people with autism and learning disabilities. The overlap is there, but I have expanded my knowledge base enormously.

I have a management and entrepreneurial background, but I also enjoy the hands-on approach and having connection with people – where you **engage with people, and see the difference your work is making**. I enjoy finding the many different forms of communication required, as the people we support have many different ways of

***It's really satisfying to know you can provide the support that people need.***

communicating.

This role is one of the most challenging things I've ever done. I can get completely absorbed in the work – it's hard to separate yourself when people need support and you can give it. Each day there is a new challenge, and a new surprise. **I am thinking on my feet all the time** – whether coming up with ideas for sessions on daily basis, articles for the magazine, or how to help a person through their challenges.

The service has so many different

## Quick Facts about Anthony

**Years worked at Guideposts:** 2

**Role:** Project Coordinator of Better Connected programme

**Background:** Originally trained as a jewellery designer and manufacturer in South Africa; since moving to the UK has worked in therapeutic arts, originally for the elderly and now for people with autism and learning disabilities.

**Main Interests:** Arts, crafts, and a wide range of music: from hardcore psychedelia to Rachmaninoff

aspects, I like using multi-media to reach people, and it means it can respond to many different individual needs.

It's extremely satisfying on a spiritual level, to be able to do this work. One of the most satisfying things is receiving feedback from members who have found the project has given them **access to something they didn't have elsewhere**. That's when you know we are providing something really valuable.

We have many members with high-functioning Autism. **Without the service, they would be incredibly isolated**. Better Connected gives them space to expand themselves: they have made new friends, and

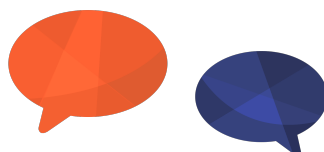
suffered the trials of friendship too.

**It's great to see members grow, and become more self-confident:** when they have their own column in the magazine, make a presentation or run an online session themselves, it's impressive. I give them the space and support them to be able to do it.

From my previous role I saw the importance of therapeutic arts, and what a difference it can have on individuals. I see this more and more. When we hold online craft groups, I witness the smiles when someone is proud of what they've created.

***The group becomes like a family community – it's an amazing experience to witness it.***

It brings everyone together, and lets them represent their community.



# Spotlight on: Specialist Day Services



Helping people with learning disabilities feel purpose in their daily life

Day services form a vital part of support for people with learning disabilities. They offer a range of activities to take part in through the day and can provide important one-to-one support with things like benefits, housing, and setting life goals. Guideposts was one of the pioneers of day services in the UK, and more than 50 years later our hubs are still going strong.



## What do people get from day services?

While many people with learning disabilities live relatively independently and have jobs, many do not, and their needs range enormously from constant one-to-one care, to light care but a need to find more fulfillment than sitting alone watching TV daily.

While other forms of care, such as personal assistants, are an option, not mixing with others in a social group can leave people isolated. **People with a learning disability are seven times more likely than their non-disabled peers to be lonely** and it is a significant driver of poor wellbeing and mental health.

Lacking a sense of occupation and purpose can also cause serious problems for people, and day services combat this. They work on building ability and confidence in each individual. This includes developing practical skills, as well as literacy, numeracy, and memory with quizzes and fun activities.

One of the most significant benefits of attending a day centre is the ability to make friends in a safe environment. Making new friends can be a daunting prospect, but in day services people with disabilities **meet others through shared activities**, and can be supported by staff to develop their confidence and social skills.

## What about Guideposts?

Guideposts currently provides four day services for people with Learning Disabilities, providing a wide range of activities that support life skills as well as social life and daily enjoyment. Art and crafts,

*"My future went sky-high when I found this place. I have made the best friends I ever had. I am happy, and I'm strong."*

gardening, woodwork, and cookery all feature regularly.

Outings and day trips are also a big part of our activities. While a paid carer or assistant can take a person on trips, many people with disabilities say they would rather go with friends.

Team leader at Guideposts' Community Hub in Stroud, Rob, says:

"Residential homes are focused on making sure people are safe and healthy. They can feed people, manage medication and appointments and keep that person safe, but they don't always have the capacity to provide activities that help brighten up life.

We have the whole day to speak with each person, work out what they want, and then come up with a plan to make that happen. We don't need to take people to appointments, or do chores. **All our time is focused on enriching that individual's life.**"

### How you can help

A donation of £85 could pay to take a group of 5 people with learning disabilities swimming.





# Remembering Mike

**We have been celebrating the life of a very special member of one of our CONNECT groups, Michael 'Mike' Mumby. Mike had been a much-loved member of the social group for over a 12 years.**

Mike first joined CONNECT with his then wife, Hazel. Hazel was living with dementia, and Mike was her main carer. He knew little about caring for someone with dementia and was seeking advice.

From the beginning, Mike was a very active member of the group, always willing to help. Favourite memories include him dressing up as Abba, leading sing-alongs with his loud, deep voice, and **fundraising with a spectacular fashion show!**

He quickly became a popular member of the group, and **supported other carers** experiencing a similar thing to himself, both in and out of the group sessions. When another couple, Laura and Farrokh, joined the group they

became good friends, and Mike would often take Farrokh out for an afternoon drive to give Laura a little respite.

## Life after losing a partner

Sadly, Hazel's dementia took its toll, and she passed away in 2013. Mike continued to attend CONNECT and support the other members. Later in the year, Farrokh also passed away and Laura continued to attend the group, again offering empathy and support to others.

Mike and Laura **remained friends and supported each other in their loss.**

Their friendship grew, so much that soon Mike proposed and Laura agreed to get married. They continued to come to CONNECT and did so much to help support others. **One treasured gift is a Boccia set**, a bowls-like game for people with mobility difficulties, which we still use today at CONNECT.



After our happy reunions post-COVID, sadly Mike's health started to deteriorate due to cancer: "an unwelcome visitor", he would say. **Despite the illness he and Laura still came to CONNECT, always hopeful and positive.** It was only during the last few weeks of his life that Mike was unable to attend.

The group miss Mike, a **'larger-than-life' character, with a heart if gold.** We continue to support and love Laura, as she shares her experiences with other carers and those living with dementia.

**Mike will always have a very special place in all our hearts.**



## Support for the Future

Planning for after we have died can be difficult, but it is important to do so. As many of our members can testify, life does and must go on when loved ones have passed away. Guideposts continues to support carers like Mike and Laura, and their generosity continues to give back to others who are in the same caring situation that they have experienced.

**If you are planning for the future and making your Will**, we would appreciate remembering Guideposts, after you have taken care of your loved ones.

A large proportion of our charity's work is funded by money left to us by supporters in their Wills. These gifts enable us to plan for the our future, to **make sure we will still be able to support people in years to come.**

To request your copy of our updated **Guide to making your Will**, please indicate on the enclosed form, or get in touch. You can always find out more at [www.guideposts.org.uk/leave-a-legacy](http://www.guideposts.org.uk/leave-a-legacy).

Thank you for supporting Guideposts, **whatever the future brings.**



# Supporter news

## Team Spirit in Action

Heartfelt thanks to our amazing team at Guideposts Learning & Activity Day Service (GLADS), who took part in Witney Colour Run.

The team wanted to be able to arrange more activities for the



Team GLADS at the finish line

people they support, including tickets to the Cotswold Wildlife Park and going to the panto at Christmas.

So they agreed to run (well, walk, skip and jump) the 5K route and get covered in colours as they went.

They made their £800 target and the GLADS members have loved the activities taking place over the summer.

**"What a Brilliant thing to do!"** Helena, a run supporter

### How can you help?

- ▶ Volunteer at one of Guideposts' services or on a day out
- ▶ Fundraise at a public or private group event.
- ▶ Take a sponsored challenge



## Guideposts Birthday Raffle

Celebrating every year that Guideposts has been helping people in danger of being isolated from their community. 51 years and counting!

### The Prizes

1st

£500

2nd

£100

3rd

£50

plus

More prizes of £25 and £10

Everyone loves a raffle, and as part of our birthday celebration we are looking forward to bringing joy to some lucky winners.

As well as a big main prize our birthday raffle includes plenty of



smaller prizes, so there are lots of chances to win.

***That's fantastic! I'll be able to go out for lunch.***

We love that it brings the whole Guideposts community together for the excitement leading up to the draw.

All the money raised from the raffle will go towards funding the vital services that our service members need – so why not get involved, contribute to a good cause and give yourself a chance to win big!

**Buy tickets online, or with the enclosed order form.**

[guideposts.org.uk/birthday-raffle](https://guideposts.org.uk/birthday-raffle)



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# About Guideposts

Guideposts helps people with dementia, learning disabilities, and mental health needs to get the best out of life.



## Tackling isolation

Our CONNECT groups are local and online social groups for people who may be isolated due to long-term health conditions, dementia, or caring responsibilities. They bring people facing a similar situation together in a fun and friendly environment, to share support and feel part of their community.



## Meaningful activity

Our Hubs work with people with complex needs on a weekly basis, over a long time period. They provide a community space and supportive ethos in which to take part in a wide range of activities.



## Support your way

Our range of factsheets cover dementia, mental health, carer support, and independent living. Individual support is provided through specialist one-to-one coaching for people living with complex mental health needs, and for carers.

**We couldn't do it without you. Thank you.**

For information on how to get involved - whether you want to donate, volunteer, fundraise, or support us at work, get in touch!

 [www.guideposts.org.uk/get-involved](http://www.guideposts.org.uk/get-involved)

 [fundraising@guideposts.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@guideposts.org.uk)

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