

AUTUMN ISSUE · SEPTEMBER 2021

# The Voluncheer

Volunteer Newsletter for  
Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire

## Editor's Letter

BY AMY RUGG

As Autumn days draw shorter, evenings a little longer, we draw breath and look back with pride over the last few months, looking forward with hope.

Find out about our amazing digital milestone, distributing mobile devices around three nations, connecting Crisis members.

Hear news of our Summer Member Event with Eleanor and enjoy reading about Steve's phonebox fundraising adventures with family and friends.

Whet your appetite with recipes from our allotment and meet lovely Tash, and her dogs, Archie and Zeus.

Plus our new Sewing Club, City of Culture events and of course, Tree of the Week.

How will you celebrate this brand new Autumn season?

Do let us know!



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# Members Summer Fun Day

BY ELEANOR NUNN

It has been a long 18 months of not seeing our members and volunteers face-to-face; a difficult but necessary decision to ensure people stayed safe. However, on the 27th of August, we finally held an in-person Fun Day for our members in the Canal Basin.

We had tea and coffee (of course!), embroidery, paint by numbers, games and puzzles and a drumming session. The sound of the drums filled the Canal Basin and let members know where we were if they were in any doubt! It was great to see members that we had not seen in a while, as well as meet some new members whom we signed up during lockdown.

People enjoyed being out in the fresh air and the Canal Basin was a hive of activity; our friends at Ludic Rooms were also running their Roam and Dwell event so there was lots to be involved in. We loved seeing our member's express their creativity while taking part in the activities and hearing about everything they've been involved with, including the City of Culture activities.

We all enjoyed lunch provided by Playwright's Café; everyone who attended raved about the food and the staff were brilliant; definitely service with a smile. This event was just what we all needed and everyone had a good time. We're looking forward to getting back to normal!

If you'd like to be involved in helping us run events for our members, including our Crisis at Christmas events, keep an eye on our website and social media channels for new and upcoming opportunities.





# Tesco Mobile 1K Milestone

BY GEMMA DRAKE

From the project's start late last year, early July 2021 saw Crisis, through the fantastic work done by Pete Gilbert, Crisis' Digital Inclusion Administrator and Tesco Mobile, distribute over 1000 mobile devices to members throughout the country including phones, laptops or tablets.

There is little need to spell out the importance of these devices to our members in this online world; without access to a device or the internet, learning, employment, paying bills or managing finances can become insurmountable challenges. This was borne out by these stats...

Of those members who received devices or data packs:

17 have gone on to secure employment, 91 have gone on to secure stable accommodation, 56 have had their homelessness ended sustainably, 102 have seen an improvement in their emotional and mental wellbeing, and 87 have improved their social connections.

These figures highlight why this project's achievements sit alongside the other vital support Crisis gives its members, enabling more people to end their homelessness.

What to do when you reach such a landmark? Celebrate with cake obviously!



*(l to r: Pete Gilbert, Digital Inclusion Administrator and Martin Lea, Volunteer)*



*Pete Gilbert with some of the over 1000 devices gifted to Crisis members to address barriers to digital access*

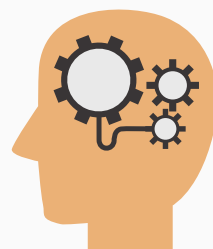
# Work, Learning and Progression

BY JEN MASON AND KIMBERLEY SYSUM

Our Progression team has been busier than ever this season, working with members in cooperation with our Work, Learning, and Support Teams. Over the last six months, our Skylight ended homelessness for over 81 members, and are continuing to support members through a variety of platforms. We have increased our in-person contact by offering appointments both in the office and out in the community. We have begun planning how we can reach and support more people across Warwickshire whilst continuing our close partnerships with agencies in Coventry. We are targetting and collaborating with agencies across the city to offer drop-in advice & support sessions to both prevent and end homelessness. We anticipate a busy few months as the weather starts to draw in and changes to government policies such as the ending of the Universal Credit uplift have an impact on people's journey out of homelessness.



Our Work and Learning Teams are hot on the trail of supporting members to access the arts with our Arts Coordinator, Ben, worked closely with Cardboard Citizens to facilitate some of our members to join the national theatre company's drama camp this summer as part of City of Culture 2021. As a result, members and others wrote and performed two plays in August at the Belgrade Theatre dealing with the particular challenges of homelessness.



A few of our staff and volunteers went to see the two productions and were impressed with the high quality of the performances and the raw, genuine expression of lived experience including barriers to health, employment and legal support.

Our allotment is now actively tended by members with support from Sadie and Gary, our Wellbeing and Basic Skills Coaches.

Sadie's Sewing Group is popular and well attended by members catching the sewing bug, meeting at Esquire's coffee shop.

A creative writing class, lead by Tash, our Functional Skills Coordinator, is starting up again; it's great to see groups come back on stream since our temporary pause over the last 18 months.







## Wellbeing: Sadie's Sewing Classes

BY GEMMA DRAKE



Sadie is running sewing classes for members every Wednesday 2-4 pm at Esquire's Cafe. Here is some of the incredible work that has been created so far. You can contact Sadie at [sadie.smith@crisis.org.uk](mailto:sadie.smith@crisis.org.uk) or 07971181635 to sign up. Alternatively, members can contact their lead worker who will get in touch with Sadie.







# Volunteer Spotlight: Steve's Phone Box Cafe

BY STEVE TOWNSEND

I think it was Sophie, my 12 year old, who had the idea for a pop-up café outside the newly installed, freshly refurbished Telephone Box, conveniently placed on a bit of council-owned land right outside our home in Balsall Common.

Having chatted about it as a family, but not getting round to it, the start of my help with the Voluncheer gave us the nudge we needed. A date was set and plans were made....



The idea was a pop-up café by the Telephone Box, selling teas and cakes, proceeds to go to charity. The girls were excited by the thought of being waitresses, and Dad saw the opportunity to get his barbecue out!

We flyer'd the lane and locality, and put some tentative marketing out, but didn't want to be swamped – COVID restrictions were still in place and we didn't want to cause concern. We had a tremendous response from the lane, with many households offering help, mainly in way of cakes/biscuits and financial. One gentleman, who was too infirm to make it out of the house, sent a lovely note and £20!



The weather held, though wasn't amazing and we were very busy in the morning, with things easing off later on. We raised £275 and a great time was genuinely had by all.

Overall, it was a win, win, win: the local community had an excuse to get together, which was really an unexpected bonus; many of our neighbours helped and remarked what a good initiative it was. We enjoyed the whole thing (well, maybe not cleaning the barbecue!), and raised funds for Crisis. What's not to like?

I'll leave you with a little story about our friend who sent the £20. We thought it would be nice to send him over a collection of cakes and a cup of tea, so I sent Niamh, my youngest, down with her friend, armed with a plate full of cakes and a cup of tea. "How did it go?" I asked on their arrival back. Olivia, Niamh's friend, replied "He was REALLY lovely, and quite emotional about getting a plate of cakes, said it had made his day, and even tried to give us more money!" I think this is my favourite story from the day...



WHEN

WHEN

WHY

WHY

## Staff Q&A: Tash Reilly

FUNCTIONAL SKILLS COORDINATOR

### When did you first join Crisis and what is your role?

I joined Crisis in 2017, as the Functional Skills tutor and moved on as the Functional Skills Coordinator.

As the FS Coordinator, I help members access further education including English, whilst also managing our FS tutor, who covers maths and ICT.

### What did you do before?

Before Crisis I taught and gained my PGCE at HMP Hewell as the Functional Skills English teacher. After a short career break, I worked a stint as a medical receptionist at a GP Practice, but when I saw the Crisis job advertised I knew it was meant for me. Four years on, it's the only place I've worked for more than three years without getting itchy feet. Crisis feels like home, so I don't intend on going anywhere anytime soon.

### What's a typical day like for you at Crisis?

There's no typical day but my weeks are spent facilitating tutorials in English and Renting Ready, whilst also undertaking my lead worker duties, creating and teaching resources (I recently set up our Google Classroom offer). I sometimes support with sign-ups and general enquiries.

### Have you ever volunteered?

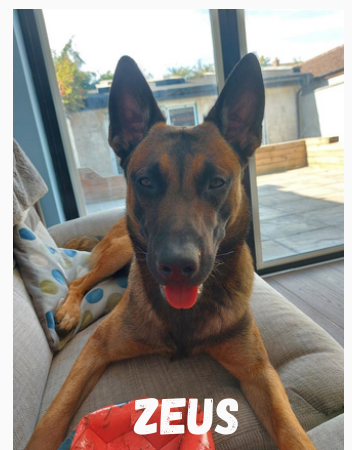
I have never officially volunteered anywhere, however, I recently organised a charity event in memory of my friend, whom we lost due to the pandemic. This was very close to my heart and gave me a brilliant opportunity to honour my friend's memory. Also, I loved watching everyone have a great time! I think if I was to volunteer it would be event organising. I help out staff every Christmas and once you've helped out Crisis at Christmas, you can do anything!

### Cats or dogs?

Obviously dogs! My Archie has been my best mate during the pandemic and so convinced was I that dogs are a person's best friend, I got another. He's mental and I'm not sure he is my best friend, actually, I think he much prefers my partner, the traitor! But I still love them both anyway!



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# Wellbeing

BY GEMMA DRAKE



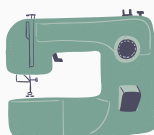
## Hobbies

Studies show a relationship between taking up hobbies or volunteering and improved mental wellbeing. One such study by Fancourt, Opher and de Oliveira (2020)\* says: “One of the popular activities in pilot studies has been...the uptake of new hobbies, ...that involve making music, drawing, sewing, carpentry, collecting, or model-making. These activities are related to other leisure activities such as volunteering in that they provide a distraction, novelty, cognitive stimulation, and belongingness...enhancing coping skills and (when part of a group) provide social support, all of which are positively associated with mental health.



In this issue, we're highlighting some of the hobbies and activities that you can get involved in at Crisis:

- Our allotment in Longford is kicking off in the sunshine. This is something that members can get involved in. For the chefs out there, this allotment provides the perfect opportunity to learn some new healthy cooking skills. On the next page, we have some recipe ideas for you.
- The activities timetable for this week is available now at <https://www.crisis.org.uk/get-help/coventry/timetable?td=2021-09-13>. Activities include yoga, technical skills, art classes, mindfulness, personal development and wellbeing.
- Sadie's Smith's sewing classes at Esquire's Café on Wednesday afternoon.
- Learn more about our member arts projects for HOME festival including the collaborations with Cardboard Citizens.
- Our puzzle pages always have games and tasks to get your mind whirring. Become a sudoku master by keeping up to date with every issue of the Voluncheer.
- Get into journaling with our writing prompt on this page.



Volunteering has some of the same effects as hobbies. If you have been sent this issue of the Voluncheer you are likely to already be volunteering for Crisis. However, if you are interested in becoming more involved, the Voluncheer is looking for new volunteer writers and editors to join our team. We are flexible, always looking for new creative ideas. Email [volunteering.coventry@crisis.org.uk](mailto:volunteering.coventry@crisis.org.uk) to find out more. Also, check out page 16 for volunteering opportunities with the Canal and River Trust.



## Journal Prompt

Write a list of ten things that you enjoy doing. Now, reflect on when was the last time you allowed yourself to do these things. How can you make more time and space in your life to do more of these activities (pandemic permitting)?

\* Fancourt, D., Opher, S. & de Oliveira, C. (2020) 'Fixed-Effects Analyses of Time-Varying Associations between Hobbies and Depression in a Longitudinal Cohort Study: Support for Social Prescribing?', *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics*, 89(1), pp. 111-113. Available at: <https://www.karger.com/Article/Abstract/503571> (Accessed: 21 July 2021).



# Tree of the Week

BY STEVE TOWNSEND



Some of you may recognise this film star tree! It's a Cedar of Lebanon, and it's from Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix. It's actually based in Blenheim Park (it's free to get into this area of Blenheim, where the tree is).

It's estimated to be in the region of 250 (two hundred and fifty!) years old having been planted around 1770.

I discovered that trees like these naturally lose branches, and the wounds left behind ordinarily heal, much like our skin. If, however, they don't heal properly, disease and rot can get into the centre of a tree and kill it. The outside can survive, however, and trees like this, despite having no centre, are still very much alive!





# Allotment Recipes

BY GEMMA DRAKE

These are a few of the family recipes that my family cooks a lot at home. I hope you enjoy trying them.

## Easy: Glazed Carrots

Ingredients:

- Carrots
- Butter
- Sugar/Honey/Marmalade

Method:

- 1) Cut the carrots into sticks and par-boil them.
- 2) Add the carrots to a pan along with a knob of butter and your sweetener of choice. Cook at medium heat whilst stirring and let the mixture caramelize.



## Medium: Nigella Lawson's Courgette and Brie Soup

Ingredients:

- 450 grams courgette
- 350 grams potatoes (peeled)
- 1 onion (finely chopped)
- 1½ litres vegetable stock
- 225 grams brie cheese (remove end rind, then cut into pieces)
- salt and pepper



Method:

- 1) Put all the ingredients except the Brie into a large saucepan. Cover, bring to the boil and simmer gently for about 15mins until the vegetables are tender.
- 2) Stir in the cheese until melted. Cool a little, then puree in a liquidiser/blender. Taste for seasoning.

## Slightly harder with more ingredients: Rhubarb & Almond Cake

Ingredients:

- 175g butter
- 175g sugar
- 3 eggs
- 125g self-raising flour
- 50g flaked almonds
- 50g demerara sugar
- Icing sugar to serve

Method:

- 1) Heat oven to 180 degrees
- 2) Lightly butter a 20cm loose-based, high-sided tin.
- 3) Whisk together butter and sugar until light and creamy.
- 4) Add eggs and beat until well mixed.
- 5) Sift in the flour and add ground almonds and half flaked almonds.
- 6) Place in the cake tin and roughly smooth the top.
- 7) Chop the rhubarb into 1cm pieces and mix with demerara sugar and remaining flaked almonds. Place in large pile on top of cake.
- 8) Bake for 45 minutes then reduce oven to 150 degrees and cook for a further 45 minutes.
- 9) Remove cake and cool for at least 30 minutes. Sprinkle with icing sugar and serve.

"Change the food  
... and we influence  
how [people]  
think. ...teach  
them how to  
garden, how to  
cook and we can  
show that growing  
food, cooking and  
eating together  
give lasting  
richness, meaning,  
and beauty to our  
lives."

Alice Waters







## Autumn's Glow

Back to school  
Back to friends  
Back to lessons  
Summer ends  
Uniform and pencil case  
Buss pass school bag  
Sleepy face  
Summer postcards  
Souvenirs  
Flip flops  
Caps and hiking gear  
All put away for another year

Now is Autumn  
Orange and Gold  
Sun warms my jumper  
But the air is cold  
Night moves closer  
A season's changing gear  
New sounds of nature being down  
For winter's sleep is near  
And as I sense the earth click on  
And change and turn and grow  
I zip my coat against the chill  
Keeping watch for Autumn's glow

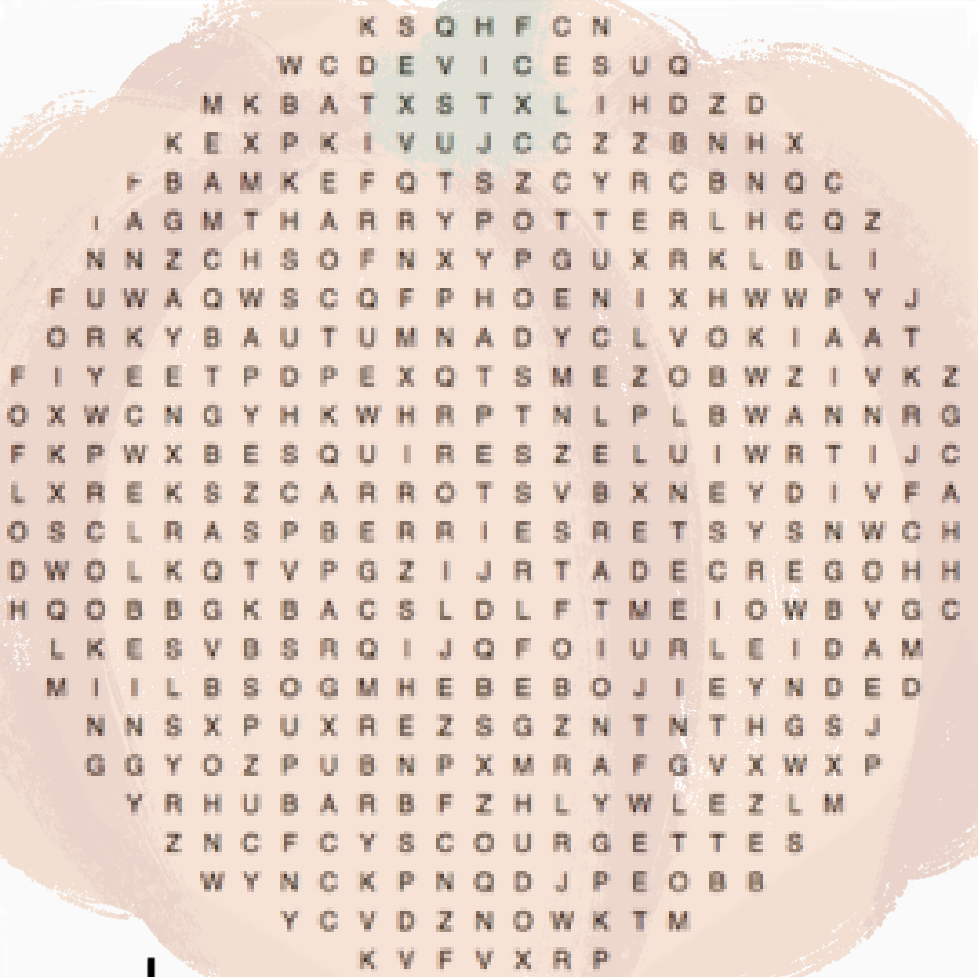
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Do you have a poem or  
story for the Voluncheer?  
Send it to us!





# Puzzle Pages



- CAKE
- SOUP
- AUTUMN
- SEWING
- WIZARD
- CARROTS
- COOKING
- DEVICES
- HOBBIES
- PHOENIX
- RHUBARB
- ESQUIRES
- PAINTING
- WELLBEING
- COURGETTES
- CELEBRATION
- HARRYPOTTER
- RASPBERRIES
- VOLUNTEERING

leaf
told

## Autumn Quiz

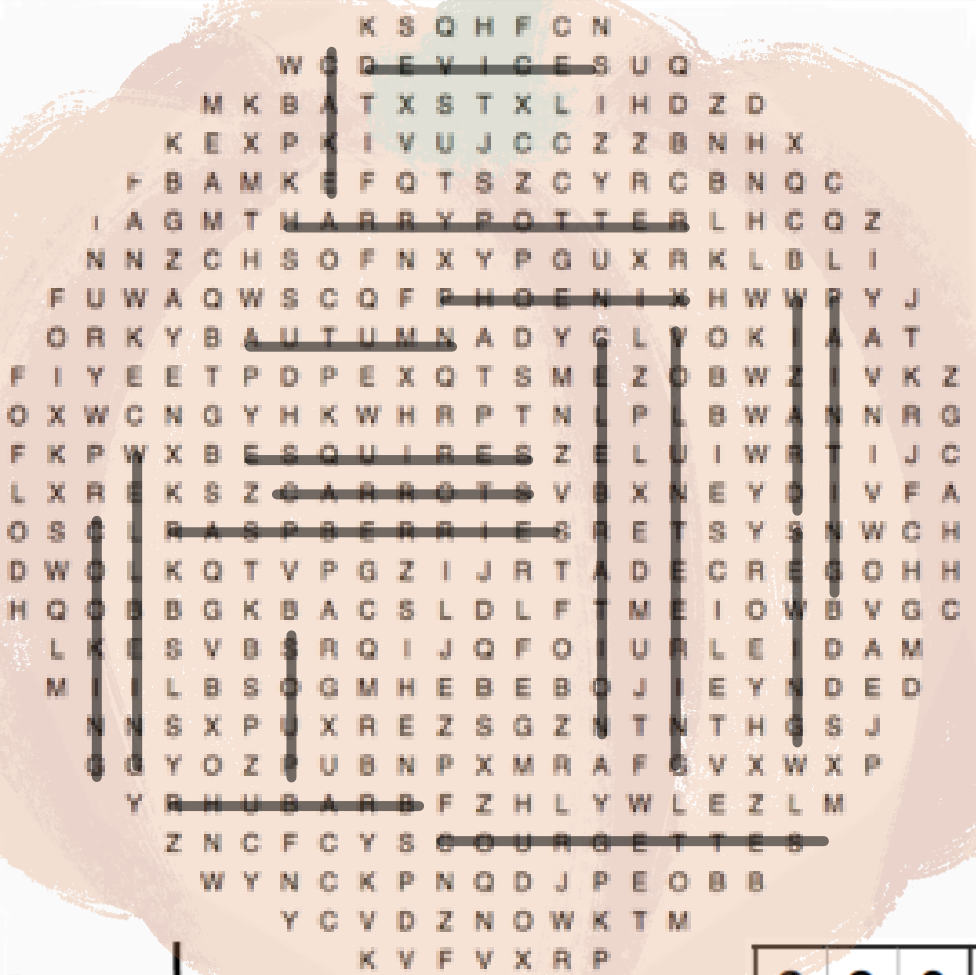
- 1) Which English Romantic poet composed "To Autumn" after a walk near Winchester one autumnal evening?
- 2) What are hedgehogs' spines or quills made from?
- 3) With around 400 players participating, what are the WCC, which are held annually on the second Sunday in October in Northamptonshire?
- 4) Name the pigment which trees stop producing, thus causing leaves to lose their green colour?

8	2	9					4
				6			
6	1	3	2				7
	9		5		4	6	8
		1				7	
				3			5
			8				
	4					1	8
2				7			





# Puzzle Answers



- CAKE
- SOUP
- AUTUMN
- SEWING
- WIZARD
- CARROTS
- COOKING
- DEVICES
- HOBBIES
- PHOENIX
- RHUBARB
- ESQUIRES
- PAINTING
- WELLBEING
- COURGETTES
- CELEBRATION
- HARRYPOTTER
- RASPBERRIES
- VOLUNTEERING

leaf
loaf
load
road
toad
told

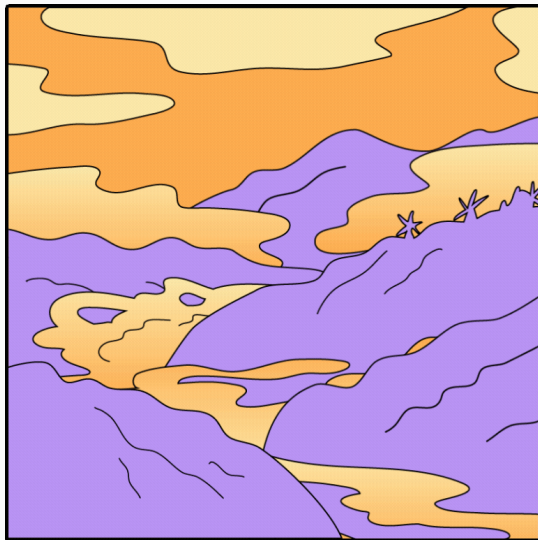
## Autumn Quiz

- 1) John Keats
- 2) Keratin
- 3) World Conker Championships
- 4) Chlorophyll

8	2	9	1	5	7	3	6	4
5	7	4	3	8	6	2	1	9
6	1	3	2	4	9	8	7	5
7	9	2	5	1	4	6	8	3
3	5	1	9	6	8	7	4	2
4	8	6	7	3	2	9	5	1
1	6	5	8	9	3	4	2	7
9	4	7	6	2	5	1	3	8
2	3	8	4	7	1	5	9	6



## Volunteering Opportunities



For more volunteering opportunities with the Canal and River Trust such as:

- Vegetation Works Developer
- Towpath Task Force
- Game Ranger- Commonwealth 2022
- Game Towpath Ranger - Commonwealth 2022
- Canal Games Operator- Commonwealth 2022
- Visitor Welcome Volunteer
- Canal Stop Plank Inspection Support Worker
- Vegetation works Monitor

Visit:

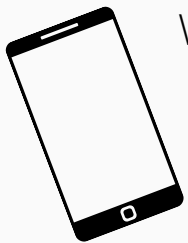
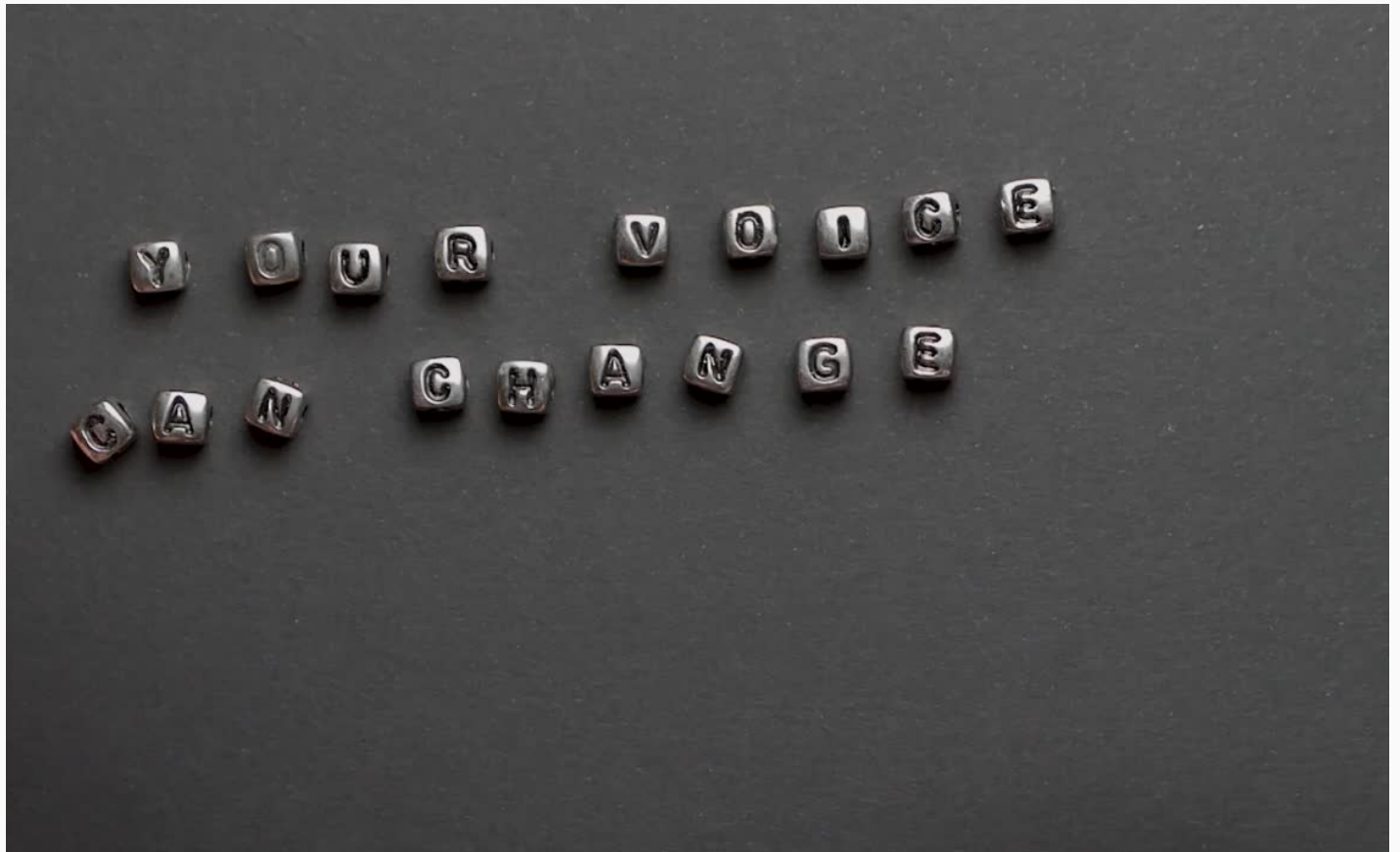
<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/volunteer/opportunities?geometry=52.413126484463,-1.5120792388916&radius=15&dateFrom=&dateTo=>



“As you grow older,  
you will discover that  
you have two hands —  
one for helping  
yourself, the other for  
helping others.”

— Audrey Hepburn





We would love to hear your views or new ideas, experiences, stories, poems, or pictures.

The most important part of this newsletter is *YOU*.

Here's how to get in touch:



[volunteering.coventry@crisis.org.uk](mailto:volunteering.coventry@crisis.org.uk)



<https://www.facebook.com/CrisisCoventry>

**OR** try our QR code:

