



**Together**  
we will end  
homelessness

ISSUE 6: September 2020

# THE VOLUNCHEER

Crisis Skylight Coventry's 1st Newsletter

## NEW THIS ISSUE:

Letter from the Editor  
From Our Director  
Success Stories  
Crisis Creatives  
Work and Learning  
Progression  
Pandemic Volunteering: *The Facts*  
Q&A: Meet Rachel, Administrator  
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Brainteasers and Puzzles  
Tree of the Week

## New Season, New Style

As we dive, head first, into autumn's season of red, orange and gold, we think about all our volunteers, staff and members who have come through these highly unusual times and have survived, adapted and even thrived. This new style issue's packed with our good news and views, photos and artwork and plenty to tease your brain. Enjoy!

-Amy Rugg, Volunteer Coordinator

## FROM OUR DIRECTOR...

This month continues our Skylight's trend for recruiting new staff and keeping our office open safely to continue to offer our members services and support.

Firstly, we welcome Riddhi Prajapati, Clinical Psychologist to our team. Riddhi will be working with both staff and members to increase awareness and understanding of the emotional and psychological needs of our members with experience of the trauma of homelessness. Riddhi is settling into our Skylight full-time and we look forward to working with her.

Over the last four weeks we have been phasing staff back into our offices at James Brindley House. Whilst it has been great to see everyone, we are limiting numbers to 6-7 staff maximum. So far, we have not had to

close our offices and continue to follow strict hygiene and physical distancing measures.

We are recruiting two new roles: a Digital Inclusion Administrator who will support members to confidently access and operate online devices to connect to learning, benefits, employment and hobbies to further their personal progression and development and a Housing Procurement Officer who will build a portfolio of private landlords with properties made available for members looking for accommodation.

We look forward to the next few months with confidence and anticipation as our Skylight goes through a period of unprecedented growth and development during a time of great change.

***"I am now officially enrolled at college...no longer homeless...I have been working and supporting myself...I will be forever grateful."***

## SUCCESS STORIES

This month we share news of member 'B' who graduated with us this month following a difficult period of homelessness and uncertainty. She is permanently housed now and has just been accepted onto an Access course for Nursing after scoring a stellar 89% on the assessment for the course which secured her place. She also passed her Level 2 English with help from Tasha Reilly, one of our Learning Coaches, studied Maths with Emma and Gemma supported her and her young daughter from a vulnerable start living in a hotel to a life with a home, hope and a future.

Here is what 'B' says about her time with us:

*"I am now officially enrolled at college. Required finance approved...I'm extremely grateful for...every support... I am absolutely fine to carry on by myself... I am no longer homeless...I [am] working and supporting myself...it has been a pleasure, I have met you wonderful people...I will be forever grateful."*



## CRISIS CREATIVES

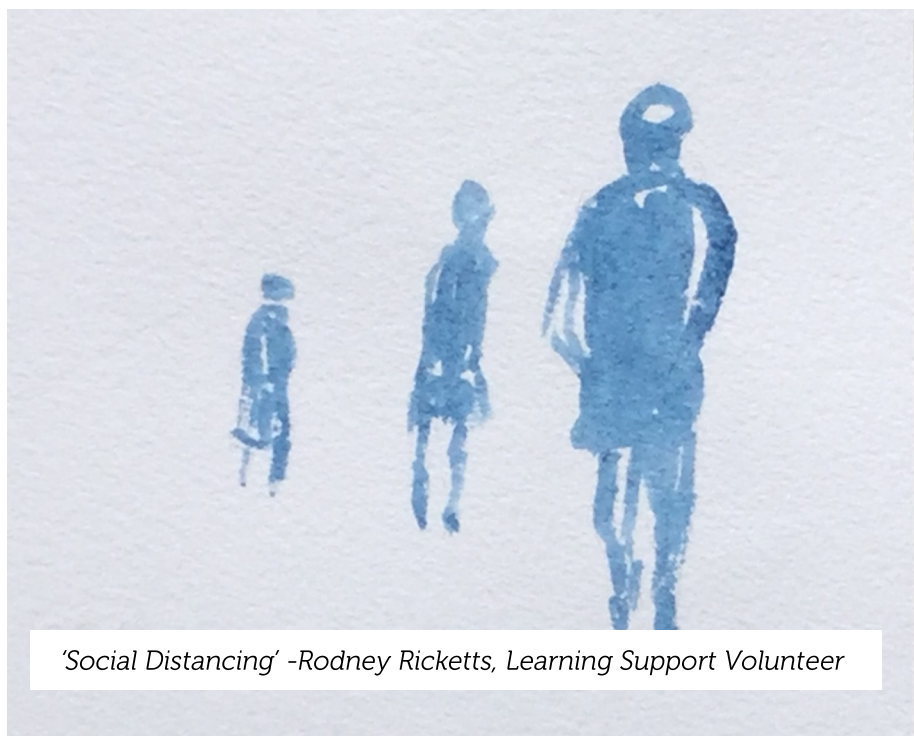
This week one of our Skylight Superheroes, Ben Davenport ran some online classes that spoke to one of our artistic members who shared with her Coach ,Mel that getting feelings onto paper helped her accept the sadness she feels about not getting a hug.

Ben's art session help her feel happier as she went into a later zoom meeting When asked why she was smiling she reported it was down to the positive impact of the art class.

I think we can all relate to the sentiments this work expresses.



'I Just Really Wanna Hug': pen and ink drawing by one of our current members



'Social Distancing' -Rodney Ricketts, Learning Support Volunteer

### Next month:

Our Autumn Member Celebration, will launch our first online gallery full of photos, sketches, paintings and textiles from our Crisis members and volunteers.

The new gallery's curated by Art Coordinators at Coventry and Brent Skylights.

**Free link in October's issue!**

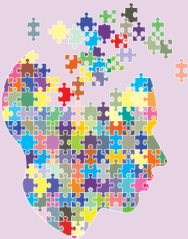


## OUR WORK AND LEARNING TEAM *ROCK (and roll)*

Whilst we all try and make sense of what the “new normal” is going to be, the Learning team has declared that the show must go on!

Taking the opportunity to enjoy the last of the summer weather, the team have been meeting members outside in cafés and parks, fulfilling every seven year old’s dream to “work on the grass today”.

Continuing the outdoor theme, Crisis Coventry’s allotment will be opening to members with a desire for fresh air and a green thumb. It’s certainly made a difference from lessons in the old ‘hub’, which under the teams watchful hammer has been undergoing a total transformation, readying up for socially distanced teaching!



If all of that wasn’t enough, we’ve had our very own zoom choir, online music tuition and even preparations for a digital art gallery of Crisis member’s artwork! "

-Ash West,  
Work and Learning Team Lead

## OUR PROGRESSION TEAM IS *GROWING ...AND GROWING*

Our Skylight Progression team is currently recruiting for a Housing Procurement Officer; this role will help source suitable and sustainable accommodation for our members to move on to and end their homelessness.

This will involve working with Housing Associations and Private Landlords to maximise the supply of suitable homes across the West Midlands for our members. The successful person will work with both Coventry and Birmingham Skylights to identify appropriate matches of members to properties.

This is an exciting role which will greatly support the teams and our members. Our Progression Coaches continue to work hard through lockdown supporting our members remotely and more recently from a social distance where needed, we are so proud that despite the pandemic we are still supporting members into work, learning and ending their homelessness.

-Kimberley Sysum, Progression Manager

One of our members enjoying a long awaited lunch in a local café with his Progression Coach, Mel. Many members have struggled with isolation and loneliness since lockdown restrictions have tightened. We have missed our members, too.

Last week, Mel told us: 'It's been really lovely to get back to seeing members face-to-face'.



## PANDEMIC VOLUNTEERING: THE FACTS ABOUT HELPING OUT

The British public are very well known for being amongst the most generous for volunteering their time, skills and experience. *So, how has the pandemic changed people's attitudes to volunteering or are we just as eager to get involved?*

According to the NHS, the UK responded generously across sectors and regions with 500,000 signing up in the 24-hour period following the NHS call for support back in March 2020. By early April a staggering 750,000 stood at the ready to deliver medicines, food, drive people to appointments or reach out by telephone to those cut off from contact with others.

Data from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations show that around a fifth of people *in the UK* volunteers at least once a month for a year or more.

While men and women report volunteering during the crisis at roughly the same rates, there are some differences:



69% of women say they've offered help to friends, family and neighbours during the pandemic, compared with 59% of men.

Women are also more likely to have taken part in the weekly "Clap for Our Carers", with 70% reporting that they've done so, versus 59% of men.

according to new research by [King's College](#)

## SKYLIGHT Q & A: MEET RACHEL PARDNER, ADMINISTRATOR

Q: When did you join Crisis and what is your job?

A: *I joined back in September 2015, so I've been with Crisis for 5 years this month! I am the Administrator for Crisis Skylight Coventry.*

Q: What did you do before working with Crisis?

A: *Before being employed by Crisis, I was volunteering for them for a while. Before this, I worked for various organisations such as F Hinds the Jewellers, Paperchase, BHS and Coventry University. I was also a student studying BSc Exercise, Nutrition and Health Psychology at Coventry University.*

Q: How do you enjoy your free time?

A: *I really enjoy getting outdoors when able to do so and when the weather permits (good old British weather, hey?!) I enjoy baking, reading and spending time with friends and family. I love arts and crafts when time allows too. Currently, I spend my evenings learning Italian via Duolingo – it's a little bit addictive!*

Q: Have you ever volunteered and what was your experience of this?

A: *I have spent many years volunteering for various companies/charities. I started volunteering when I was just 7 years old. I would go to work with my parents. I loved helping others and felt like I was achieving something without being tied down at the same time. I've volunteered for Midland Heart in Care Homes, worked with various youth centres doing all sorts of youth work, I've volunteered with St John Ambulance, Coventry University and various Primary schools too...including Special Educational Needs which was my favourite. I love volunteering and believe I always will.*

Q: Describe a typical day in the office or working from home

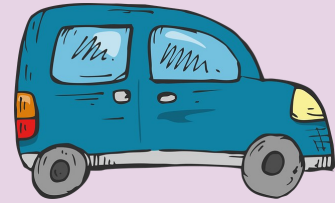
A: *A typical working day for me (and many others I am sure) looks very different at the moment. I am still able to cover most admin tasks from home which I'm pleased about. There are a few jobs that I am unable to do from home, which can be a little frustrating, but everyone is having to adapt to 'the new norm' and there's plenty of support in place. I spend my day answering many emails, replying to general enquiries both within the organisation and externally. I help look after the finance for the office too which is one of my favourite parts of my job...unless you ask me at the end of a month!!! I support with booking travel for staff and members. Place orders for staff, member's and the office in general. I help support the office in any way I can from an admin point of view. It's very hard to explain my day to day role as on paper, it may not look like a lot, but it is a very busy job most of the time!*





## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Are you a steady hand behind the wheel with a great sense of direction? Enjoy helping our members and meeting people? We are looking for volunteers to make deliveries of well being packs, food, crafts and other small items once or twice a month for around 2 hours.



Sound like you? Email: [volunteering.coventry@crisis.org.uk](mailto:volunteering.coventry@crisis.org.uk)

## Brain teasers

Have a go at these tricky teasers... (answers in next month's issue)

1. A man stands on one side of a river, his dog on the other. The man calls his dog, who immediately crosses the river without getting wet and without using a bridge or a boat. *How did the dog do it?*
2. What makes this number unique -- 8,549,176,320?
3. A man takes his car to a hotel. Upon reaching the hotel, he is immediately declared bankrupt. Why?

## Tree of the Week: The Gift of Random Sycamores



I passed this Sycamore on a morning walk into town. Located outside our Coventry Canal Basin area it's unclear if this tree was planted intentionally or just grew from an opportunistic seed (as sycamores often do).

My attitude to sycamores is cagey; they soak up more than their share of water and nutrients from other plants and grow quickly, taking up space and blocking out light. Yet, this leafy giant provides shelter and shade, a home for wildlife, and softens the industrial, unyielding ethos of the neighbourhood.