Seasons Greetings from our Chair

Seasons Greetings to you all!

As we head towards the festivities in a few weeks' time and make plans to gather family and friends around us, I think it's a good time to consider all the essential workers who will be providing key services in a range of industries over this period. Although organisations may have reduced staffing, I would still like to take this opportunity to pay homage to a few, in particular medical and health and social care professionals, transport personnel and those in hospitality, many of whom will be working during this time. Included in the group of people who will be working of course will be some of our amazing staff who ensure the people we support experience the best time possible over the festivities – we commend you for your loyalty and thank you whole-heartedly for putting others before yourself.

As 2024 beckons, it is also a time to reflect on our achievements and think about the future. Following the pandemic, this last year could perhaps best be described as being at the start of our recovery. The impact of COVID (although not the threat that it once was) will remain with us for many years to come and there are likely to be further squeezes on spending in the sector as we start to repay the substantial financial costs of the pandemic. Other changes on the agenda for health and social care, in particular digitalisation and staffing are constantly under review. At Aim Up, we are in the process of implementing a new system for electronically managing our rostering and care records which will help to capture information more easily at the point of care and also enable staff to respond more quickly to people's needs. Implementing this has huge training and resource implications initially but once embedded will ultimately save time.

We will also be reviewing our strategy early in the new year in light of some of the changes to Health and Social Care but are satisfied with the strong and stable position we are currently in, which is down to the skills and expertise of everyone concerned. A huge thanks to you all.

On a final note, whatever your plans in the coming weeks I wish you all the very best. Enjoy the festivities!

Outreach

December marks one year since we began transitioning to our Outreach Service, and what a year it has been!

Starting as they meant to go on, our Outreach service has been a roaring success.

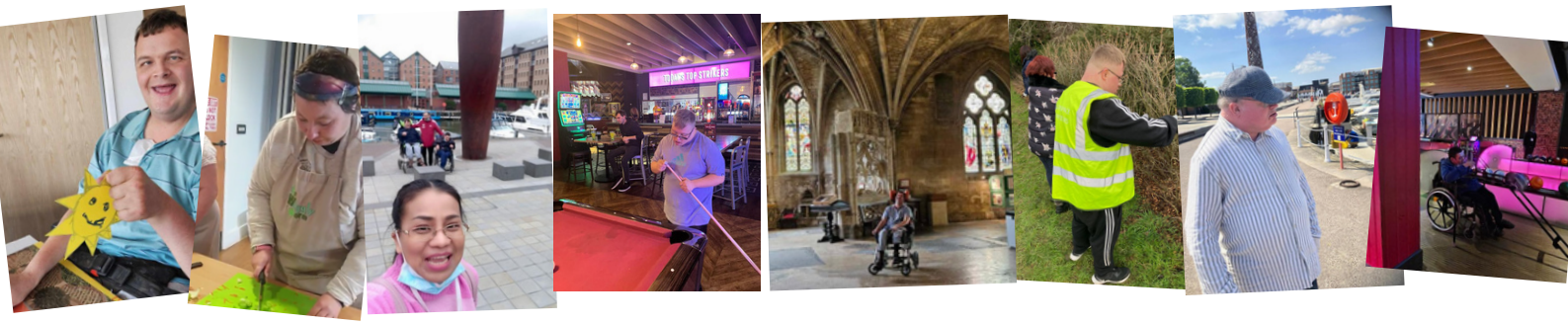
Every week 11 individuals are enjoying a range of activities. We've been challenging each other to games bowling, pool, and crazy golf. We've met up to picnic in local parks, and spent time visiting nearby attractions like the Historic Docks, Medieval Tewkesbury, and Cheltenham's famous festivals.

Some people have taken part in cookery courses with the local charity, Wiggly. Others joined us at Belmont School to make bunting, flags, and other festival decorations with Artshape.

Monthly Service User meetings have continued to provide chance to share ideas, make suggestions, and plan the month ahead. We end these meetings with fish and chips and a catch up in Well Close House gardens.

Some of us have even been carrying out audits in the charity's supported living houses. We have enjoyed meeting people, learning about where they live, what activities they do and getting their feedback.

But that's not all – a few people have found voluntary work, and others regularly join Hatherly Parks Green Spaces team. We work to keep the park tidy for our community, and spend time gardening, sweeping leaves and cutting bushes. We have recently been asked if we would join the team at Pittville Park, and help with their sensory garden and raised beds!



Outreach: Impact

Steve has visited lots of places, including...

"Gloucester, bingo, market, Abbey Church (Twekesbury), Monkey (Monks) Kitchen, bowling and pub!"

Carol has been searching for the right voluntary role for a long time. This autumn, Carol visited Cornestones and now is a regular volunteer at their Children's Group.

Carol works hard, from preparing snacks and drinks, to setting up activities, joining in sessions and clearing away. Her hard work is really appreciated by Cornerstones who have recently told her she is an important part of their team. Carol is very confident when she's working, and really proud of her achievements.

Well done Carol - keep up the good work.

"I did it, I got a job. YES, YES, YES!!!"

Before starting Outreach, Nicola hadn't used buses to get out and about! With the support from our staff team, Nicola found her confidence and now regularly uses the buses to get around. Visiting Cheltenham and Gloucester with friends, Nicola's opened a whole world of opportunities.

This is a huge achievement - well done Nicola!!

At our last Service User Forum meeting and during a catch up at the ice skating rink Rich told us...

"I am doing lots more with the staff I have now. We have done quite a lot and gone to lots of places. I like meeting up with my friends. I want to carry on doing this and don't want to change. We're going to Twekesbury next Spring!"

Supported Living

Over the last year the people we support have been busy engaging in their community, alongside developing their independent living skills and exploring new places.

Some have enjoyed holidays visiting the Lake District, Butlins and Burnham on Sea . Everyone has enjoyed day trips, returning to favourite places including West Midlands Safari Park and Slimbridge Wetlands Centre. Some chose to venture further afield and explored new places, visiting Stratford Up-on-Avon and other lovely destinations.

Many of us have spent time keeping fit. Some have been working hard at the gym and swimming in our local pool. Some have tried their hand at badminton, and others have returned to regular cycling sessions.

On quieter days, we've have enjoyed walks in our local countryside, trips to the cinema, meals in local restaurants and mooching around the shops and garden centres.

We're incredibly proud of what everyone has achieved, and look forward to the new experiences 2024 will bring .

Simon
Service Manager

"Having changed job roles within the charity in September from training to now Homecare Manager, 2023 for me is a case of catching up with what needs doing, familiarising myself with everyone and having a clear plan moving forward into 2024.

A goal for myself, my team and the people we support for 2024, is to find new ways of engaging and encouraging all who are interested, in developing and learning new skills to enable them to become more independent. Whether this be developing day to day living skills or learning a new subject to help them prepare for paid employment. This can be something really exciting to look forward to, and something really fulfilling for the people we support."

Garden Project

This year has been another very busy year at our Garden Project. We've spent lots of time tidying the boarders, cutting back hedges, shrubs and fruit trees and clearing overgrown reeds in our ponds.

We've grown everything from fruit, and vegetables to herbs and tea. Which have been used when we bake, cook and BBQ.

The team have been busy developing their workshop skills, building and repairing various things from benches and tables to duck houses and bird feeders.

Our rescue hens have enjoyed time exploring the gardens, and wandering around the raised bed area. They have laid plenty of fresh eggs which we've scrambled, fried, and boiled!

After another busy year, work at our garden project has quietened down. for the winter months. We're looking forward to spring when our bulbs should provide so much welcomed colour to our gardens.

Social Enterprise

Our Social Enterprise, The Portland Guesthouse, has welcomed over 2900 guests from around the world to enjoy Cheltenham and the Cotswolds. As we look to the end of 2023, our diary is anything but quiet. December Races and Christmas Markets continue to draw crowds, and guests to our Social Enterprise.

This year The Portland Guesthouse has retained their prestigious Visit England awards, including the Silver Award, 4 Star Accommodation Award and their infamous Breakfast Award.

Alongside welcoming our wonderful guests, we have welcomed new students who are working hard to complete their course work, work experience and are beginning to draft their CVs. We would also like to Congratulate Troy and Ben, who completed their courses and work experience with us in 2023!

[Before joining TPG] "I could make my bed. Now I clean rooms meet guests and do washing. I help more with housework stuff. And keep things tidy. I'm not sure what I want to do next"

Ben

The Hub updates

Following our last newsletter (October) where we announced that planning permission had been granted for our hub, we are now awaiting the contractors to begin tackling the groundworks and prepare the site for the installation of our building.

Behind the scenes we are working hard to choose a name for 'The Hub', along with developing our activity plans, course content and community connections ready to provide a variety of learning, leisure and community activities to our local community.

As the build progresses and our plans develop we will be keeping our website updated. Keep your eyes peeled at: www.aimup.co.uk/thehub , for more exciting news about the hub, courses and activity plans.

Christmas Video

This Christmas, instead of a traditional Christmas Card, we have put together a short video sharing many of our favourite photos and memories from 2023 with you all.

To our wonderful supporters, we wish you a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year!

www.aimup.co.uk/christmas2023.