

30TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL EDITION



Providing personalised support and housing for 30 years



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Welcome to our 35th issue of Creative Life magazine!

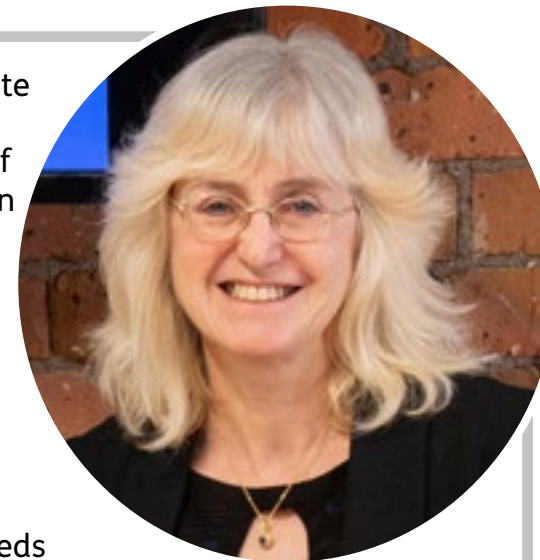
In this special edition, we are celebrating our 30th Anniversary of providing care and support to those who need it. We have shared stories from staff and service users across the country who have been part of our journey!

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We would love to hear what you think of this issue of Creative Life! Get in touch to share your thoughts or if you would like to get involved in future editions: marketing@creativesupport.co.uk



We visited the Burkhart Accommodation, one of our longest standing services, for a special 30th Anniversary photoshoot! The service was registered to deliver support to women with mental health needs on 25th June 1993, and since then has provided caring, creative and excellent support to women who need it. Several of the residents were admitted to long stay psychiatric hospitals in their late teens and early 20's, and didn't move into the residential service until they were in their 50's. Originally known as South Manchester Women's Services, it has been a home, a place of safety, a place of fun and a place of recovery.



I am delighted to share a little history with you as we celebrate **30 amazing years of Creative Support**. We started off very modestly in 1990 with a £50,000 grant, employing just myself and one other person, with a shared desk but charged with an ambitious mission to develop a range of innovative housing and support services for people with mental health needs in Manchester. Our founders agreed that our core values were to promote **independence, dignity, equality, rights and inclusion** - I am proud that we have stuck to these key principles.

In 1990 we held a stakeholder conference in Manchester and heard calls for supported accommodation to meet unmet needs for young people, African-Caribbean people, women, survivors of abuse and those at risk of homelessness or offending. Within 5 years we had developed services for all of those groups of people and more.

We registered as an independent organisation with charitable status in August 1991, becoming Manchester Housing Consortium. In 1994 we changed our name to **Creative Support** - to show that our main focus was all about supporting people in a creative and solution-focussed way.

In 1992 we opened our first service for women with mental health needs in South Manchester which enables women to recover and build their self-esteem. Between 1993 and 1995 our resettlement projects enabled people to move on from institutional in-patient wards in North Manchester General Hospital and Prestwich Hospital to a range of community accommodation with support. These services are still providing people with high quality housing and opportunities to grow in independence.

We then started to look beyond Manchester, developing services across the North West then the North East, the Midlands, London, and the South East. As well as continuing to provide mental health support we developed **person-centred services** for people with a learning disability, physical disabilities and older people with care needs.

From 2003 we started investing in buying and building homes, as well as managing properties on behalf of other social landlords. As we built up our property portfolio we decided to register as a provider of social housing in our own right and achieved this in 2012.

In 2014 we launched Creative Academy, offering excellent training and development opportunities for our staff, volunteers and service users. I was delighted when our Training & HR Teams achieved **Investors in People 'Gold'** in 2020.

We now support over 6,000 people across England in 67 local authorities and employ 5,000 staff. Over the years we have been governed well by committed Trustees, worked in partnership with many dedicated people & agencies, and employed thousands of incredible staff. Most importantly we have achieved great outcomes, supporting people across the country to enjoy **fulfilling lives**.

A very big **THANK YOU** to everyone who has contributed to our charitable ethos, our history and success - we couldn't have achieved this without you!

Anna Lunts, Chief Executive

YOUR GOOD NEWS STORIES

As Covid restrictions lifted, so did our spirits! It has been a delight to see staff and service users from across the country getting back out, doing things they enjoy.



For some people, getting back out in public spaces can feel like a daunting idea, after spending so many months staying safe at home. The tenants at Elland Court in Blackpool wanted to get used to being out and about again when the restrictions eased, so they decided on a fabulous, posh picnic! They ventured to Stanley Park to enjoy their picnic food then played lots of games including 'stuck in the mud' and 'hot potato'. Everyone loved their trip and it has made them excited for more in the future.

Ben from Forrester's Fold in the West Midlands loves going to the zoo - it's one of his favourite activities which he has really missed during the pandemic. So when the lockdown restrictions were lifted, and zoos were able to reopen, he was first in line to go back and see all the animals! Ben enjoys watching and learning about the different species, especially the giraffes. Trips out to places like zoos can help improve both physical and mental health, and help us learn more about our environment.



It's important to make time for a bit of fun, especially when times are uncertain. The team at Simonside Court in South Shields decided to host a cowboy-themed party for staff and residents over the bank holiday weekend. They all dressed up in their shirts and boots, played rodeo games and ate some tasty grub that wouldn't have been out of place in the Wild Wild West!



They had American themed basket meals, bingo, and an Elvis sing-along - we can't wait to hear about their next theme of choice!

The residents at Buxton Road in Telford recently held an Elvis themed party. Several members of the house are huge Elvis fans and wanted to start a series of themed afternoon events with a bang! All the tenants at the service helped plan the party and get all the decorations and bits they needed. They had a great turnout with everyone choosing to come along.

Getting out and about in the fresh air can do the mind and body the world of good - the service users at Lingwood Court have been doing just that! Yvonne, Tim, Rupert, Donna, and Miles have been all over London on their weekly walks, and have all shown dedication to improve their fitness and explore their city.



Since forming the group, they've been to lots of different parks across North London, including Highgate Wood and Kenwood House. They have all been enjoying the warm spring sunshine, looking for bird houses in the trees, and going to the café.



As Covid-19 restrictions continue to ease, everyone is looking forward to expanding their group, and meet more service users who are avid walkers to join them on future walking adventures.



Have you got an interesting story, some exciting news or a photo of something that you're really proud of?

WE WANT TO HEAR ABOUT IT!

We could share it on our website, social media, or include you in a feature in our next issue of Creative Life!

Keep up to date with our good news by following us @crtvsprt



CREATIVE SUPPORT'S JOURNEY



OUR 30TH LOGO!

To celebrate our 30th year, we have designed a special edition logo - we hope you like it as much as we do! It will be printed on a variety of merchandise and will also be available in digital form, so you can add it to your email signature and letter heads!



Contact marketing@creativesupport.co.uk if you would like to request a copy of the logo or order some merchandise!

ACCREDITATIONS

We are proud to have been recognised by a wealth of organisations, and we strive to achieve best practice as a health and social care workplace.

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

Creative Support has been awarded Silver across the company and has achieved Gold for our Training and HR departments.



INVESTING IN VOLUNTEERS

We have achieved the Investing in Volunteers quality standard.



STONEWALL DIVERSITY CHAMPION

We ensure all LGBT+ staff are free to be themselves at Creative Support and beyond.



MINDFUL EMPLOYER

We work towards better mental health in the workplace.



DISABILITY CONFIDENT EMPLOYER

We think differently about disability, and take action to recruit disabled people.



SKILLS FOR CARE

We are an endorsed provider of high quality training to the social care sector.



THE HALO CODE

We pledge that our Black colleagues have the freedom to wear all afro-hairstyles without restriction or judgment.

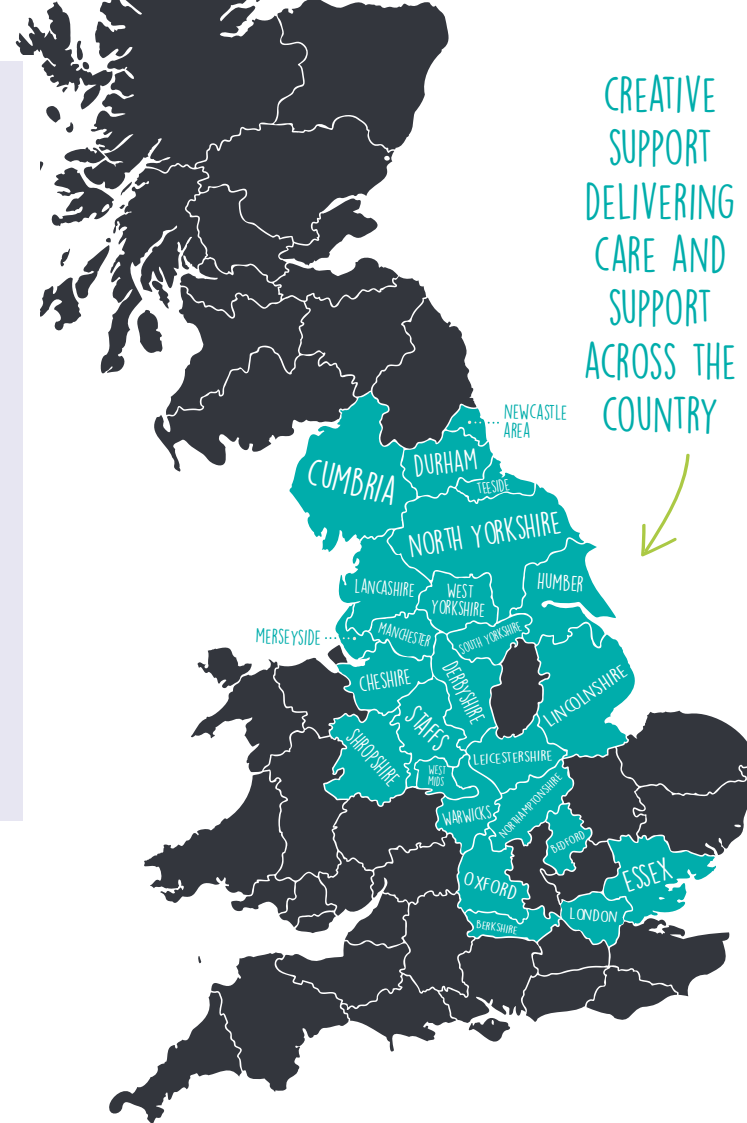


CHAS ACCREDITED CONTRACTOR

We take health, safety and wellbeing obligations seriously.



CREATIVE SUPPORT DELIVERING CARE AND SUPPORT ACROSS THE COUNTRY



CELEBRATING OUR COLLEAGUES

Creative Support wouldn't be the organisation it is today without the dedication, hard work and passion of our staff all across the country. We spoke to some of our incredible longstanding staff members about their time at Creative Support, and they have shared what has made their Creative Support journeys so meaningful.



"I started out as a Support Worker at a young person's scheme. I was given the opportunity to gain qualifications enabling me to progress to my current position. I've met some amazing people. My most memorable moment was our football team from Fletcher Court taking part in a tournament - we decided spur of the moment to go. We encouraged the service users to get a team together and ended up winning! Seeing their faces when they got the cup and medals was such a good feeling. I was so proud." - Wendy Robinson, Unit Business Manager and Registered Manager, Manchester

"I quickly felt a different work culture at Creative Support- there is such a strong emphasis on empowering the people we support. We focus on what people can do, not their limitations. I worked with a young man who had an incredible personality. Sadly he passed away from SUDEP. I learnt a very valuable lesson...every day counts. We support people with various needs, some with life-limiting conditions and they deserve the best support. I have since worked with the young man in mind." Pia Parekh, Supported Living Service Manager



"I started as a Support Worker and over time progressed to my current role - so I've had the pleasure of watching the service grow and develop. Creative Support offered me lots of opportunities and they put me through my NVQ, my diploma and the management programme ILM. They gave me the confidence I needed to progress. I'm really lucky here in Wolverhampton as we have such an amazing team. I can't imagine working anywhere else and I wouldn't want to anyway!" - Sian Barber, Registered Service Manager



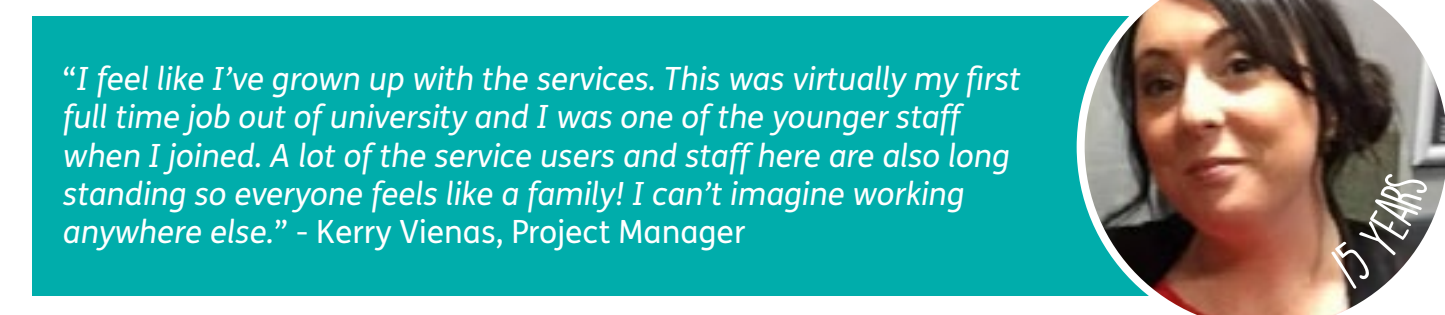
"My favourite part of the job has been making a difference to people's lives, which is why I entered care in the first place! This has included seeing people grow their independence, community access, and friendship circles. I feel like Creative Support have supported my personal development from starting as a Support Worker to becoming a Registered Manager, to becoming a Deputy Registered Area Manager whilst working towards a BA (Hons) in Management Practice as part of my apprenticeship with Creative Support." - Vicki Baker, Deputy Registered Manager



"I started as a Support Worker in North Manchester in 2005. It was my first full time job after university and I didn't know what to expect - I just knew I wanted to do something that helped others, and found the more I did it, the more I enjoyed it. I worked in the services for seven years before moving to work in the Out of Hours Team at Head Office in 2012. Our support staff are the lifeblood of Creative Support and it feels good to be a part of a team that backs up their wonderful work." - Jonathan Bradshaw, Social Care Governance Lead



"I work as part of an amazing team, so hats off to our management Sian and Kerry who are so supportive and positive - it really filters down to everybody. I was supported to do a business admin course at college and was able to do the course around my shifts. I was then encouraged to do my Level 3 as well. I started out as a Support Worker, then because of my incredible managers I was able to start in the new role as Administrator!" - Manjeet Baker, Administrator



"I feel like I've grown up with the services. This was virtually my first full time job out of university and I was one of the younger staff when I joined. A lot of the service users and staff here are also long standing so everyone feels like a family! I can't imagine working anywhere else." - Kerry Vienas, Project Manager



"I started as a support worker after graduating from university and over the years, developed an interest in helping people with complex needs and assisting individuals to transfer out of long-stay hospitals. I've enjoyed setting up services and seeing service users getting their first jobs, growing their family relationships, and settling into their first homes. Creative Support have backed my personal development as they've supported me to train as a Learning Disability nurse while I completed my Masters in Forensic Psychology." - Anna Wark, Senior Practitioner for the Complex Care Team



CELEBRATING OUR COLLEAGUES ERROL WILLIAMS

We sat down with our resident Maintenance Facilitator Errol and had a chat about how a letter to CEO Anna Lunts in 2001 became a 20 year career! He tells us about this chance meeting, what his job entails, and how Creative Support is more than just a job; it's a community.

How did your Creative Support journey start out?

Before I started in 2001, I was long-term unemployed - I had a friend who I was doing some unpaid work for as a typist and admin assistant. He worked in 'move on housing' which is when people leave prison and need accommodation. When I asked about paid work, he said to get in touch with Anna Lunts, so I wrote her a letter, applying for a job. I had an interview and was offered a three month volunteer role, as I didn't have any experience in the sector.

I initially started working in Maintenance, Purchasing, Housing, and Finance and spent a few days in each department, then ended up moving full time into Housing Maintenance and Purchasing, as there were only two other people in that department at the time. We had a big asset boom in 2004 and we were buying houses every week, so there was lots to be doing! Then we grew to a team of 10 people who went out on the road.

Nowadays we have 20 staff in our team which is a big jump from three in 2001! When I joined, Creative Support was only in Greater Manchester - it's grown outwards over the past 20 years! I like change, especially change for the better. When new people came in with new ideas, it was great and made the role even better.

Do you have any hidden talents?

I am also a DJ and have DJ'ed for Creative Support at a few of our events such as our Christmas parties and afternoon events for staff and service users. I've also been hired by my colleagues for weddings too! I also DJ'ed at 'Creative Support's Got Talent' a few years ago which was held at Band on the Wall in Manchester. I remember the guy that won was an incredible dancer and did a mix of four or five tunes.

Can you tell us about a moment at Creative Support you're particularly proud of?

I'm really proud of starting our 5-a-side tournament in 2009. We ran it for service users and staff. Blackburn had the team to beat and they won it two years on the run! It all started as some Head Office staff were playing 5-a-sides, and we thought "why not start a tournament?". It developed and went on for three years running on every Saturday afternoon.

Can you tell us about a memorable moment at Creative Support

I got married three years ago in Barbados, and my team held a breakfast and Facebook Live'd me the morning of my wedding - we had a great morning together! I think that's what makes Creative Support so great. They let you take a moment to understand a problem fully. I've always operated by removing the panic of the moment, and getting all the information first. I think the ethos of the company is very inclusive, we follow the 'Halo Code' and things. It's a company where you can go and talk to Anna in her office without having to go through 15 people!

What's a piece of advice you'd like to give to people?

Always get the full story.



CELEBRATING OUR COLLEAGUES LEIGH BIRCH

We spoke with Director, Leigh Birch about her almost two decades with Creative Support. She tells us about her career development, memorable moments, and the importance of being transparent.

Can you tell us more about your time at Creative Support?

I started working for Creative Support in September 2002, which means I'll have been here for 19 years in September. When I started I was 18 and fresh out of college with a qualification in Health and Social Care. I knew that I really wanted to work with people who had mental health needs and I remember seeing an advert for Creative Support. My initial role was a Support Worker at Bury Community Mental Health Outreach service and I progressed from there.

I was made a Director in 2017 and I oversee our Bury, Salford, Tameside, Central Lancashire, Northampton, Leicester, Warwickshire, Oxfordshire, Reading, Wokingham, Newbury, and Slough services.

Tell us more about your time at Creative Support - anything you're particularly proud of?

During my time at Creative Support I have worked in many areas of the country with all types of services and people with diverse needs. I have spent a lot of my time supporting services to improve quality, setting up new services, managing TUPE staff transfers (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment regulations), and contract requirements.

I am proud of Creative Support's ability to face any challenge with positivity and resilience. We genuinely support people to maximise their independence and live meaningful lives with plenty of opportunities. During the pandemic our staff have shown tremendous creativity in helping the people we support to adapt to a new way of living. The emotional and physical support they have given to our service users is exceptional in an unprecedented situation. We have achieved good quality outcomes and overcome barriers, along with providing activities and family contact remotely to ensure the people we support still enjoy interaction with others, even if it's from afar.

Please share a memorable moment you have during your time at Creative Support?

There's so many to choose from! I remember one particular time, our Swinton services started an arts and crafts group and met every week to create great projects. One week they decided they wanted to send a birthday card to the Queen so they got together and designed a lovely birthday card which we sent off. To our immense, but happy, surprise, the Queen replied with a personalised letter! It made the service users so happy and we got it framed so that they could see it and keep it safe.

Could you give our readers a great piece of advice?

My advice would be to do your best and be transparent. This is part of the ethos of Creative Support itself. If you are struggling, ask for help or advice, and be honest about it. There are so many people there to help you in any area of life, and when you ask for their help it makes all the difference. Struggling on your own is so tough, but solving problems and breaking down barriers with others means you will get there as a team. You're also only as good as the team you work with so supporting each other is a big part of it!



CATHRYN'S JOURNEY

Support Co-ordinator, Cathryn O'Meara shares how she went from receiving support, to delivering it, and how Creative Support helped her through a part of her life that saw her struggle with pain, depression, anxiety and substance addiction that impacted 10 years of her life.

I was a busy working mum of 3, I had an active social life playing netball, hockey and juggling the children's activities but it worked and I was 'living the dream'. I had always taken sport seriously and had a few injuries along the way, I shook them off and carried on.

I'd noticed one morning I had a pain in my shoulders and upper back and put it down to a fall I'd had playing hockey the weekend before. As the days passed the pain got worse and I struggled to get comfortable. I'd find myself sitting on the kitchen floor against the units banging my head to distract from the pain in my back (logical to me at the time...) I can't remember how many GP visits I had but whenever I returned I had a bagful of painkillers, anti-depressants and sleeping tablets. I had investigation after investigation with nothing to show for the pain. It was debilitating.

After 3 months of constant pain and trying to carry on, I think I gave up in my mind. My resilience and 'shake it off' attitude had disappeared. I was on the settee day in, day out sleeping, waking at silly hours realising the children had gone to bed, or gone to school - I didn't actually know. I felt useless as a mother, wife and plunged into depression. Nothing seemed to interest me other than the drug induced sleep I craved to escape from the pain.

I had 5 years of treatments and therapy. I had ECT to kickstart my brain - what the heck? Next came admissions to psychiatric wards and visits to pain clinics, but nothing worked.

As you can imagine, this took its toll on my whole life and my 25-year marriage had come

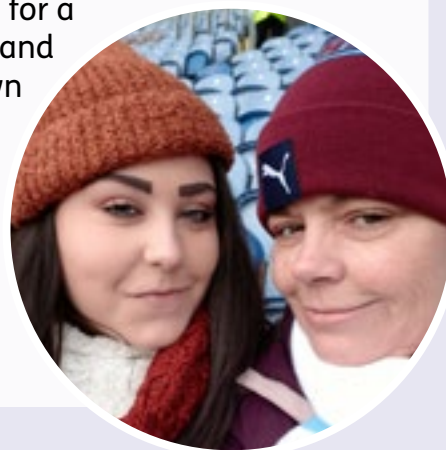
to an end. I lost my job, my home and the future we had planned together as a family. I found myself moving into a flat with my daughter. (I honestly can't remember how that happened). She became my carer, and would have to watch me drink morphine from the bottle, then pass out on the sofa.

Support workers would come in and encourage me to get up and go out, but I just couldn't. I'd get angry at their suggestions to attend groups, exercise or go for a walk. I'd watch my daughter cry when I refused and shouted at them to leave. I knew I was wrong, but I felt helpless.

I had a visit one day when I must have been having a day of clarity, as I agreed to go to one of the appointments they had made me, It was close to home and I knew they would leave me alone for a few days if I attended. I walked the short distance to the Creative Support Social Inclusion Service. My support worker was there waiting for me. I was sweating, out of breath and petrified of walking into the building. I couldn't breathe, why was I agreeing to this?

The lady who ran the service came outside and encouraged me in. I felt awkward and again angry I was having to do this. I think we chatted outside for a while about things and she invited me down the week after.

I accepted the invite but had no intention of going. All I could think was 'get me out of here and home'.



The week after the initial meeting I had a knock on the door, I ignored it. Someone shouted through the letter box saying they would call again in the morning. Sure enough the morning after the knock on the door came, but I ignored it again. This carried on for a few days until one morning I opened the door and saw it was the lady from Creative Support.

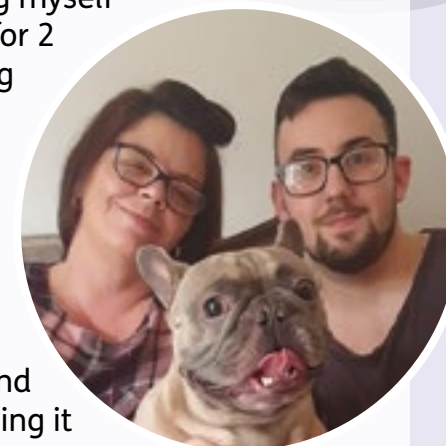
I had always kept a nice home before I had become unwell and felt embarrassed at the way I was living; empty bottles of morphine, medication packets everywhere and no milk to offer her a brew. She wasn't fazed by any of this and even complimented me on a few things. She made me feel comfortable and asked me if it was ok to visit again in the morning. It became a regular thing dropping in on her way to and from work. She'd encourage me to chat about what I was good at, what I liked and where I saw myself in the future.

I had told her I enjoyed cooking but had no inclination to do this anymore as it felt pointless to cook for just myself. She invited me to a cooking group and asked me if I would cook for everyone. I agreed I would. She helped me source the ingredients and although very nervous I cooked for the group and sat and ate with them. I felt like I had achieved so much, I felt welcomed, I wasn't judged and I felt safe. I went home feeling different...

Although still wracked with pain and still overdosing on prescription painkillers most days I attended the groups Monday to Friday every week. I chatted with others and started getting a bit of exercise. I was asked to manage the football group as they knew I had had an interest in team sport. I was a service user and volunteer at Creative Support before I knew what was happening. My health improved, as did my motivation whilst my dependence on medication decreased.

I was referred for detox to come off the medication safely and never looked back, thanks to the persistence of the Creative Support staff member. It was found after this detox that I had an undiagnosed compression fracture in my upper back, which I think led to the initial pain. I was told the exercise and detox would reduce my pain, as I became physically and mentally stronger. Apparently pain medication taken over long periods can actually increase pain.

I still have flareups of back pain but work through it by keeping myself busy. I volunteered for 2 years before applying for a post within the service, I had an interview and was totally rubbish, my mouth dried up and I couldn't speak. I knew I had good morals and values and hoped this would swing it in my favour.



After 10 hard years I started work as a full time support worker with Creative Support in 2016. It is now 2021 and although I have moved on from the service that picked me up from a dark place, I am still working within the company at a rehabilitation service. I now help people recovering from substance misuse and who have mental health issues. Using my experiences to help others cope with theirs is the most rewarding part of my role. I will always remember the kindness and persistence in those early days and try to mirror those qualities in my support to others. *There is always hope for recovery.*



SERVICE USER AWARDS

Recognising our Service Users Achievements



Our Service User Awards recognise the incredible achievements of Creative Support service users and tenants across the country. In the last year, we have made awards to over 100 service users for their accomplishments! It is inspiring to hear how people have stayed positive, and supported their friends and co-tenants despite facing challenges. Thomas and Anita were both Top Prize winners in our recent Service User Awards, and here is why...

THOMAS' PERSEVERANCE PAYS OFF



Thomas had been out of employment since the end of 2019 and despite the many challenges presented by the Coronavirus pandemic, he remained optimistic and motivated to continue applying for jobs.

When he's not been busy completing job applications, Thomas has filled his spare time by volunteering with different organisations. He's now a Champion for the local Partnership Board, volunteers at a local charity who provide activities for people who are blind or partially sighted and he has also helped out at the nearby Creative Support office.

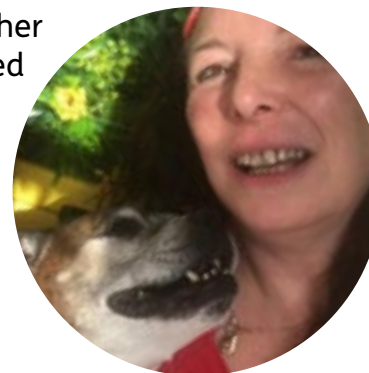
Just before Christmas, Thomas received the exciting news that he had been successful for a job as a Care Assistant at a local care home. He is overjoyed to be starting his new role! Support Coordinator, Petra, says *"It's boosted his self-esteem and confidence. I nominated Thomas as he has always been positive that the right job for him was just around the corner! He's starting a new chapter and becoming a fellow key worker!"*

ANITA ACTS AGAINST ADVERSITY

Despite Anita facing adversity over the past year, she has persevered and maintained a positive mental attitude, making immense progress in all aspects of her life. She has actively been keeping on top of her home, has worked with finance companies to pay off her debts and arrears and is sticking to a strict budget plan to keep on top of her money.

Anita has also been actively improving her health. She has learnt new recipes to cook at home, attends regular fitness classes online and has been working towards stopping smoking. She has been participating in the Creative Together Zoom sessions, which she has found very beneficial. Anita is constantly trying new activities at home and continues building on what she has learnt in the Zoom sessions afterwards.

Despite the changes to her lifestyle, Anita has stayed positive. While she has experienced anxiety, she has persevered and continued to remain resilient throughout the past year by trying new activities.



ACHIEVE Q AWARDS

Recognising our Exceptional Staff



We have given almost 300 Achieve Q Awards over the last year, for outstanding achievements, positive outcomes, or ongoing determination facing Covid-19. We have also added a 'Dignity in Care' Award for staff who provide the most compassionate and dignified end of life care. The latest winners of the Achieve Q Silver Awards are the amazing team at Grove Court, Doncaster, who together helped service user Lizzie, realise her dreams!

The team at Grove Court support Lizzie Prince, who dreamt of celebrating her birthday in style by socialising in a pub. However, due to the recent coronavirus restrictions this unfortunately wasn't a safe option.

So on the 29th May, staff made sure Lizzie had the party of her dreams - at home, in the garden! They created her own pub party instead, where soft drinks, snacks and crisps were served behind the bar!

Lizzie's favourite film is Grease and she said she would love to have a carnival theme, similar to the one at the end of the film. So the staff team researched this and recreated a carnival style set up, with hook-a-duck games, ice cream and hotdogs, alongside the huge inflatable pub in the garden area.

The staff team went above and beyond thinking of every detail, including the birthday cake, bunting, and balloons. The day was thoroughly enjoyed by Lizzie's neighbours and the staff team are very proud that this party could be pulled off, given the obstacles and restrictions of Covid-19.

Lizzie said "The staff made my dreams come true and I was so excited and happy. I loved it, it made me smile lots and lots!"



For more information about the Service User Awards, or to request or submit a nomination form please contact the marketing team at Head Office:



0161 236 0829



serviceuser.awards@creativesupport.co.uk

We review Achieve Q nominations once a month, so if you believe a member of staff, or team deserve credit for their hard work, then nominate them today!



You can download the form on our website, or contact achieve.q@creativesupport.co.uk for more information.



CREATIVE TOGETHER



Creative Together began in **1997** as 'Breakthrough', which was set up to support people with mental health needs but has continued to grow to welcome a wonderful, diverse range of service users in Manchester and nationally! Breakthrough became an established hub and café when it was developed in the basement of Creative Support's previous Head Office buildings in **2001**.

FROM ONE ROOM TO
NATIONAL ZOOM!



In **2019** Breakthrough became **Creative Together** as we moved to an incredible new home in Manchester City Centre! Creative Together's new hub has enabled us to develop the service, increase the opportunities we offer, work with other voluntary sector organisations, welcome a diverse range of service users and progress our food enterprise.

Creative Together continues to grow as Creative Support's national co-production hub and you can be involved at Creative Together both in-person and virtually!

BE INVOLVED IN CREATIVE TOGETHER!

1. Book your place at one of our in-person or virtual activities and events, focusing on health and wellbeing, creativity, social inclusion and fun! We run a timetable of in-house activities at Creative Support's co-production hub in Manchester and coordinate a fantastic national timetable of activities and events on Zoom.
2. Become a member of Creative Together and receive invitations to special events and bespoke open days, a copy of our newsletter and discount in our café.
3. Become a Co-Producer and work with our Creative Together team to develop your own idea for an activity or event (either in-person or virtually), co-produce our newsletter or be involved in co-production at Creative Support.



JOIN OUR MONTHLY DISCO!

"I like the disco I love to sing and dance!" **David**, from Blackpool, is a regular at our virtual discos and enjoys showing off his amazing dance moves. Be sure to book your place at the next disco for a dance-off with David!

*Never again will I take my friends and the centre for granted, it's great to be back at the centre with my friends.
Lockdown hasn't defeated me or my friends,
It has made us
Stronger Together, Kinder Together
Creative Together*

by David Johnston, Creative Together member

If you'd like to be involved in Creative Together we'd love to hear from you! Get in touch by emailing creative.together@creativesupport.org.uk or call **0161 974 5459**.

MEET SOME OF THE CREATIVE TOGETHER CO-PRODUCERS!

Stuart is a Creative Together member and Co-Producer and has been involved in the service since it began in 1997!

In 3 words, what does Creative Together mean to you?

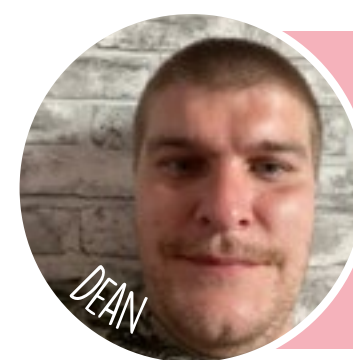
Safe, welcoming, diversity

How are you involved as a Co-Producer?

I attended a Co-Production Course with Creative Together and from that I worked with staff and members to organise events. Just before the pandemic we were about to launch a monthly co-produced Come Dine With Us night! I also helped cook the meals for the café in the co-produced cookery sessions and made sure new members had a warm welcome to the centre.

How has Creative Together changed since it started as Breakthrough in 1997?

It's been a journey! It started as one small office, emerged as a café in 2001 and expanded more in 2004 to have spaces for sessions. Since it's been in the new centre it has evolved. It is vibrant, friendly and welcoming, it's like a new beginning! I'd encourage service users to be involved here and give it a try – it's diverse, you can do things at your own pace and there's plenty of choice.

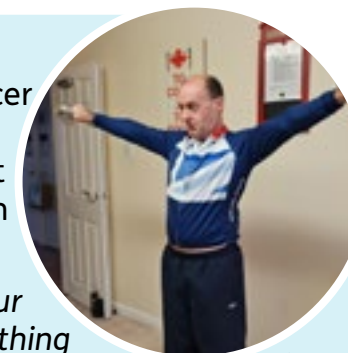


Dean, from Wokingham, is a Creative Together Co-Producer and uses his knowledge and skills as co-host at our virtual quiz times! Can you answer his quiz questions? (find the answers on the back page!)

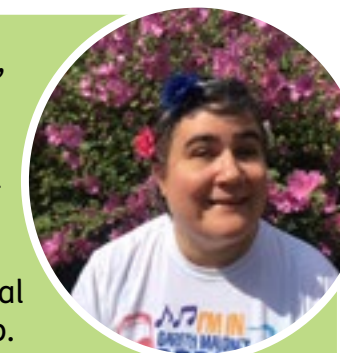
1. In Harry Potter who played Harry Potter?
2. In One Foot in The Grave who plays Victor Meldrew?
3. What's the capital of Portugal?

Ado, from Doncaster, is a Creative Together Co-Producer and shares his love of exercise with a monthly 'Get Moving With Ado' session on Zoom!

"Exercise helps look after your heart, it's good for your breathing and is good fun. I get to see all my friends on Zoom and it lifts my spirits."



Lexi, from Leeds, is a Creative Together Co-Producer and has shared her creative writing talents in a virtual Poetry Workshop. She is keen to co-host future sessions!



OPPORTUNITY, CHOICE AND WELLBEING

Our person-centred approach means that we focus on achieving positive outcomes for the people we support. We believe that every single person deserves the right to have opportunities and choice in their lives, and in turn, this will improve their wellbeing. On the following pages, we have shared some stories from service users across the country who have been able to make positive changes in their lives with support from the Creative Support community.

MARTIN'S OPPORTUNITY FOR INDEPENDENCE

We spoke with service user, Martin in Salford about his recent move and taking the leap into new accommodation!

Could you tell us a bit about yourself?

My name is Martin and I'm 59 years old. I like doing arts, crafts and working in wood and paint. I also like to go shopping in the local community and go on holidays.

Can you tell us more about your move?

I moved from Monks Court which is a 24-hour supported living service to Pendleway just before the pandemic. Pendleway is also a supported living service, but tenants live in their own bungalows and staff are in a building across the road, so it's more independent.

I wanted to make the move because I wanted to live more independently. I was encouraged by my managers Claire Rigby and Lea White to take the leap. I have epilepsy so this was a big step for me. With lots of encouragement and reassurance, I successfully made the move. Now I wish I'd done it sooner!

I'm very happy living at Pendleway as I'm left alone to do my own projects including my woodworking and arts and crafts. I also like that now I come into contact with more staff and I feel more included because there are so many more people around. It's like living in a community and there are lots of other tenants here too so I get to speak with them when I like.

My current project is decorating my new bungalow and staff are assisting me to do this. Together we're picking new flooring so it's to my own taste and we've stripped all the walls ready for new wallpaper. After we've done the living room I want to redecorate the rest of my bungalow.

What are you looking forward to next?

I'm looking forward to more communal activities. I'm going to start on new woodwork projects, and am excited about being able to go on holiday again! I also want to get to know the other tenants at Salford Disability Services. I had to shield throughout the whole pandemic because of my epilepsy, so I'm excited to get out and about again.

The staff at Creative Support have made my move smooth and eased my stress. I've not had as many seizures because I'm settled and stress-free now. Everyone at Salford Disability Services is so kind and caring.



KATHERINE CHOOSES SELF ACCEPTANCE

Katherine Taylor receives support from one of our services in Tyne and Wear, and over the recent years, has been on a life changing journey. She has kindly shared her story with us about how the Creative Support community have helped her find her true self.

"My name is Katherine Taylor and my journey for my true self began at the age of 19 after a loss in the family. I felt like I could finally become who I saw within the mirror."

Although I have been through a lot of ups and downs, I will always hold in my heart the help and support I have received from the staff at Creative Support. During my journey I moved into Knavesmire House as a crisis tenant. Although at first I was unable to convey my emotions, I still felt welcome from all the staff. Over the following years, I feel extremely humble to have had the support network provided by Creative Support's North Tyneside mental health services.

When I was 27, I received my confirmation for gender reassignment surgery. It was the best decision I have ever made to make myself feel whole. I had a year-long healing process afterwards. I cannot thank my supporting staff enough for everything they did to make my healing process comfortable during this time. The staff helped me keep my environment safe and disinfected, collected food on a daily basis, and also offered emotional support.

For anyone either on a journey or in a difficult place - you are not alone and everyone at Creative Support deserves the utmost respect for their kind and caring natures."



JASON SUPPORTS WELLBEING

Jason, a service user at Whinside in Lancashire talks about his decade with Creative Support and his new, exciting job helping others!

"I've been with Creative Support around 10 years. I like to watch football, listen to music, and watch films. I support Accrington Stanley - I'm a season ticket holder!"

The Creative Support staff listen to me. They take me out on day trips and also have helped me learn to cook. They have also supported me to improve my budgeting and my finances. I like to spend time with staff. They helped me to secure my new job! I also have a friend who supports me called Sally and she always helps if I call her.

My new job is a peer support job at the NHS where I help other people settle into their new homes and learn more about the area. I wanted to do this as it's always important to be kind to others and try and help how you can. I believe you should always be kind to others and try to help them."



DANIEL IMPROVED HIS WELLBEING

Daniel in Durham has been with Creative Support since 2014. When he first arrived, he found it hard to express himself and to communicate with the world around him, which caused him lots of anxiety. Over the past seven years, Daniel has massively grown in confidence and has a great relationship with the team at the service! The staff have helped Daniel with his communication and introduced strategies to cope with anxieties, including his posting system.

Daniel used to post items that were out of place or that he had finished with. For example, after going out for a drive, Daniel would post his shoes over the six foot garden fence to show that the activity was finished. Afterwards it would make Daniel anxious because he knew that the items were out of place and not where they belonged. Staff asked if he could try posting the items in a safe place or if they could help him put the things away but these options didn't work for him.

Instead, staff thought outside the box and found a Royal Mail postbox which they then installed in the garden next to the fence Daniel likes to post his things over. Staff then started to hand items to Daniel and asked him to "post the letter". Within a few months, Daniel started using his official post box and when he'd posted the items, he felt better because he knew they would be safe in there and exactly where he could find them.

Daniel continues to surprise people at his service by being so incredibly brave. He has not only received his COVID-19 jab, but he has also had his bloods taken without having a hospital stay for the first time! The next planned event is a lovely short trip away to a cottage which Daniel has never done before.



IN STYLE



RICKY TURNS 30 WITH US!

Ricky at Buxton Road is celebrating his 30th birthday in August, just like Creative Support!

There are lots of things that Ricky loves, including bowling, football, colouring in and drawing pictures. Ricky also enjoys listening to all types of music and staff have said he will often be playing music through YouTube and singing along in a happy-go-lucky mood!

Ricky also loves joining in with group activities, such as Buxton Road's recent Elvis night (read more about this on page 5!) and cinema evenings. Along with group activities, he loves one-on-one time with his brother who supports him to complete the weekly shop. Recently, Ricky and his brother took a trip to Barmouth Beach to enjoy the sunshine!

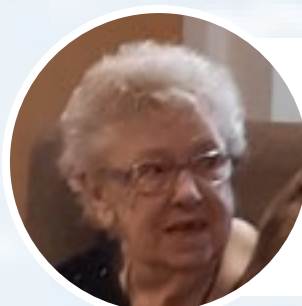
Ricky picked this short sleeved shirt, paired with long, camouflaged shorts for his birthday outfit and said "I haven't made any plans as yet, the staff have asked me what I would like to do so I'm thinking about it. Musicians such as Skepta, Drake and Buggy Malone inspire me, so maybe I will celebrate with some good music! I chose to wear this outfit because it's a warm day and hopefully it'll be warm then too. If I could give some advice to anyone turning 30 like me, I would say - get your head up and enjoy yourself!"

SHARE YOUR POSITIVE STORY WITH US!

Have you, or someone you know been supported to achieve something great recently?
Is there something you've done that makes you really proud?

WE WANT TO HEAR ABOUT IT!

Let us know by emailing marketing@creativesupport.co.uk and we can share your positive story on our social media, website or in future editions of Creative Life magazine!



LILLY SHARES SOME ADVICE...

We spoke to one of our oldest residents at Creative Support, the lovely Lilly in Leeds who recently turned 100! We asked what the secret to a long life is and Lilly said: "Work hard, look after yourself, and play hard."

HAVE A BIRTHDAY COMING UP?

Do you have a birthday or a special event coming up that you are looking forward to celebrating in style?

Maybe you are thinking of having a theme to your birthday party, or you are just looking forward to having an excuse to get dressed up in your favourite outfit?

Let us help you celebrate! Send your photos and stories to marketing@creativesupport.co.uk





CELEBRATING OUR COLLEAGUES GRACE ENNIS

We sat down with Grace Ennis, an Area Manager in Greater Manchester, who has worked for Creative Support for 14 years! She tells us more about her time with Creative Support, how a good recommendation can change your life, and the importance of being person-centred.

Can you introduce yourself and tell us more about your role?

I manage our Trafford, Stockport, and Tameside mental health and learning disability services, along with our floating support for Trafford and Stockport. My role is to manage the contracts and our commissioned services. I ensure all our staff are fully trained and know our policies and procedures, making sure we're always person-centred and transparent.

Can you tell me more about your journey with Creative Support?

I started at Creative Support in 2007. I'd just qualified as a Registered General Nurse in Manchester and I initially came to Creative Support to get experience of working with people with mental health needs. After completing my degree, I asked the other student nurses for recommendations, and they gave such high reviews of Creative Support it really drew me to the organisation.

I intended to stay for six months but when I got through the door I just loved the aims and ethos of Creative Support. It's not just about delivery but about the clients and making sure their individual support needs are being met as per their requirements. All the individuals we support have a voice and it's so important to make this a priority.

I started as a Support Worker, then was promoted to a Support Coordinator, then a Project Manager, then a Unit Business Manager, then a Service Manager, and now to an Area Manager! Creative Support is all about personal development and growth. I now have two great line managers, Anna Lunts and Colette Leigh - they really boost my confidence and have so much faith in me and making sure I aim for the best for myself.

Can you tell me about a moment you're particularly proud of?

I would say the sensory room we set up in the Trafford Registered Office. The room is in the main centre of Sale which meant it was easy to access from all of our services. All the activities were personalised to the service users' needs. For example we adapted Zumba sessions for our service users who have mobility issues, so everyone was able to get involved and enjoy the activity.

I was so proud of this because it was a big aim of my line manager, and to be able to deliver it was amazing. It's received rave reviews from service users and their family members.

Can you tell me about a memorable moment at Creative Support?

In 2020, Creative Support introduced our Black Lives Matter Manifesto and that made me feel really proud to work for such a company that was recognising the movement. As a Black person and a minority, this really stands out for me.

Can you tell me a piece of advice you'd like to share with the readers?

Everything is achievable. Being a Black female, sometimes it can feel that you're limited in what you can do and only get to a certain point in your personal and career development - but everything is achievable if you reach for it. **Go for it** and take advantage of what's out there!



CELEBRATING OUR COLLEAGUES MAHIP SINGH

Mahip has been a member of the Creative Support community for 13 years and is now Director for our London services. He tells us more about how his role has developed over the years.

Can you introduce yourself and tell us more about your role as a Director?

I started working at Creative Support in 2008 as a service manager and now have the enormous privilege of being the Director for London with a wide variety of supported living and extra care services in Barnet, Camden, Wandsworth, Tower Hamlets, Bromley and Essex. I am ably assisted in overseeing these services by an exceptional bunch of colleagues.

Can you tell us more about your time at Creative Support?

I'm happiest about our growth in London in the last decade. I started working in London in 2011 and at that point we had a few services in Barnet and Camden which had less than 80 clients and staff in total. Since then, with the support from Anna and our excellent tendering team, we have grown to over 1,000 staff and service users across London and Essex. I feel delighted to have played a small part in this growth.

I'm also particularly proud of our seven strong team of activity workers. The newsletters for Camden and Barnet, Bromley, Tower Hamlets and Essex are testament to their dedication to keeping our clients engaged and happy by undertaking various activities and outings - London walks, open mic nights, baking sessions - you name it and they do it! Their role has been of even more importance during the pandemic where people's social lives have been interrupted.

Can you tell us about a memorable moment during your time at Creative Support?

Becoming a Director in 2014 was amazing and it is an experience I continue to enjoy and learn from every day.

Another memorable moment was when we retained our services in Tower Hamlets. We took on those services in 2014 and worked very hard to improve them. Retaining these contracts in 2017 was a job well done and achieved in no small part due to the dedication of the 6 senior managers in Tower Hamlets.

On a lighter note, some of us did the Three Peaks Challenge (not in 24 hours!) in 2019. We did Scafell Pike, Ben Nevis, and Snowdon with a team of five people which was a beautiful experience.

What is the best piece of advice you've been given?

The first is from my dad who always says "Difficult will be done at once; impossible might take a little longer." I am not easily affected by initial disappointing results as I know that with enough perseverance we can turn things around.

The second is from our Chief Executive, Anna Lunts. She has taught me to not only resolve problems in a timely fashion, but more importantly, to always endeavour to add value to any situation. So I consider two questions: 'how to solve the matter' and also 'what can I do to make things better'. I try and incorporate this into all my workings as more than 90% of my job is problem solving.



CELEBRATING OUR COLLEAGUES JOHN PRICE

We spoke with John in Wolverhampton about his role as a Community Outreach Worker. He told us all about what attracted to him a career with Creative Support, some memorable moments, and the importance of having a great manager (or managers in John's case!).

Tell us about when you started at Creative Support?

I started on the 6th August 2010, so I will have been with Creative Support for 11 years in August. I started as a Support Worker and previously held positions in retail and care beforehand. I wanted a new challenge and had a look around and Creative Support's job advert really stood out. The hours really suited to me and I liked the ethos of the company.

Can you tell us more about your role?

I'm a Community Outreach Worker with our Wolverhampton Outreach Services. We support service users to do community-based activities, from college courses to using public transport; we always leave the activity up to the service user to choose.

The main thing about Creative Support is that no one day is ever the same. We do such a wide range of activities and events and they're all based around each person and what they would like to do.

As lockdown restrictions began to ease, one service user in particular loves using the train so we've been able to take longer trips further afield. We've recently been to Coventry and Birmingham to have a look around the shops and city centres. He also loves going to the airport but there's not much activity going on there at the moment!

Can you tell us about a memorable moment at Creative Support?

In my role I typically work with the same service users, and there's one person I've worked with since I first started. When we met he was just a teen and now he's turning 30 in a few weeks. It's been great seeing him gain skills and community awareness and grow into the person he is now. There's another man I work with quite a lot and he's increased his confidence, his self-help skills, and has developed great relationships with the people at the service. In this role, we also work closely with people's families and friends, and I supported him to go to his sister's wedding which was lovely.

What is the best piece of advice you've been given?

This has come from my two managers, Kerry and Sian - *"always keep an open mind to challenges that may arise."* This has been really helpful and has come in useful many times, including when dealing with new arrivals. You read the person's care plan and meet the person, but things might change from this initial meeting and document. Feeling confident to discuss any issues with my managers is also incredibly helpful and leads to positive outcomes.

I work in an amazing team and I've had a lot of jobs in the past but Sian and Kerry are the best managers I've ever had. I always feel like I can approach them with any problems, be they professional or personal.

Opportunity Choice and Wellbeing

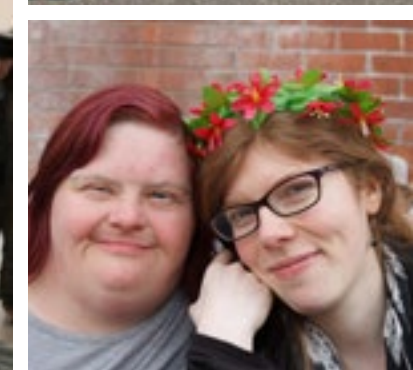
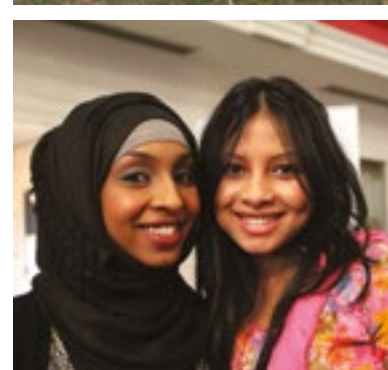
Poem by April Jenkins

Opportunity is started with a conversation
Conversations are filled with hope and joy
Joy comes from empowering and participation
To participate is to share, to share is to offer **Choice**

Choice gives people empowerment
Empowerment is to create goals
Goals all have a start, middle and end
We are only in the middle of a journey
Journeys are all different as are people and support
Support is what we do to ensure **Wellbeing**

Wellbeing is seen by people sharing
"I felt like I could finally become who I saw within the mirror"
"I have a vision and now it's clearer."
Strengths develop and come from fear
Fears are a state of mind,
Minds like to **Connect**

Connections are maintained,
and have been for 30 years
and will continue to be.



HELP US CELEBRATE — YOUR WAY!

Anyone can get involved in our 30th celebrations! April, a Team Leader from Bedford, has a real talent for Creative Writing. So to mark the beginning of our 30th anniversary celebrations, she took some of the stories from this magazine as inspiration for the poem above. Isn't it brilliant!?

Send your creative celebrations to marketing@creativesupport.co.uk

SERVICE PROFILES — THE LAURELS AND YARDLEY HUB

The Laurels care home in Cumbria supports older people to live joyful and active lives. It has been part of Creative Support's fabric for almost six years, and has been a staple in the Cumbrian community for 35 years. ShirleyAnn, the Manager at The Laurels explains a bit about its history, and how they support their residents.

How many people does The Laurels support?

We can support up to 28 people here. This includes some double bedrooms as we also support couples. Our residents' ages currently range from 72 up to 96.

Can you give an example of how The Laurels delivers person-centred care?

We supported a lovely Irish man named Frank up until his passing recently. Up until the age of 90, Frank was really active - he loved playing bowls and was a big Manchester City fan. When he was younger, he raised a lot of money for the club and used to know a lot of the old football players. He said *"they weren't prima donnas - they would get on the bus like normal people!"*

Frank also recorded bits of his life in a book. He wrote about when he came over from Ireland, he used to ride a Norton motorbike all the way from Manchester to Scotland. I got in touch with my son who has a friend with a Norton, and they brought it for us to see. I invited Frank's family over so they could see his reaction! We ended up asking the gentleman with the bike to come back a couple of times because it brought Frank so much happiness. He also brought a framed photograph of the bike for Frank, which he kept in his room.

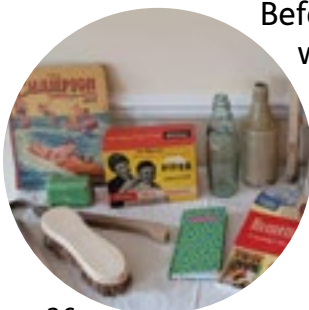
Frank's key worker was Gemma - she was so caring and compassionate with him. She is also a Man City fan and bought him the club's tops and memorabilia. When Frank became poorly, Gemma would sit with him before and after her shifts, and even on her days off. She never wanted him to be alone. What Gemma did was amazing, and she was with him when he passed. Frank's family gave Gemma his signed Manchester City football afterwards as a token of thanks for all her incredible care.

What activities have The Laurels been up to recently?

Because of the pandemic, lots of people were missing cuddles and touch, so we had a think about what we could do. We ended up inviting lambs and chicks to The Laurels and everyone got a chance to feed a baby lamb and hold some little chicks. It was really nice for them to feel something warm and living when they were missing it so much.

Also, since I joined, I wanted to make The Laurels more homely.

Before my dad passed away in 2014, one thing we would do together is go antique and charity shop shopping and I ended up bringing quite a few bits and pieces to the service for everyone to enjoy. This includes my dad's record player which sits by the entrance and plays some of his motown records! We've also put up a vintage washboard and camera on the wall and have done some memorabilia sessions with them with all the residents too.



I have been a service user at the Yardley Hub, Birmingham since November 2018. I remember the hub being very new and modern, but still having a lovely, welcoming, and homely charm about it. The café, to me, is a positive element as this space can be used to talk to other people at the hub as well as having some homemade food from staff or other service users.

My favourite activity is the Creative Writing class as I enjoy the different challenges set each week by Mariya. This helps me to explore different writing styles and topics. It is a good escapism and helps me to become more creative.

Creative Support's, Yardley Hub in Birmingham opened in August 2018. They started off by trialling different social groups for individuals who might feel isolated - offering them a safe place where they could express their individuality and be with other people.

Alongside creative sessions like gardening and arts, other groups are available to service users who want to learn more about their mental health diagnosis and work on their wellbeing. Yardley Hub also opened a café and service users found it very convenient to come to the groups and at the same time be able to stop, relax, and have a bite to eat. When fully staffed, there are six full time equivalent staff members and just under 200 service users who regularly access Yardley Hub.

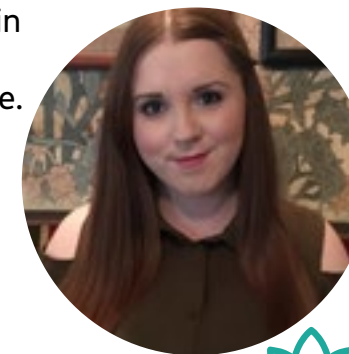
Service user input is very much recommended, and timetables reflect the opinions and interests of those taking part. The hub is a safe place to socialise, and it is generally a very positive space for the community in regards to maintaining and helping mental health.

Although the hub had to close during the pandemic, the wellness of the service users was still at the forefront of everything.

Staff made regular wellbeing checks to service users to make sure their needs were met. They also made sure that no service user went without food, and relevant arrangements were made through different available organisations and charities.

Slowly, a few face-to-face groups have been re-introduced as the restrictions ease. Yardley Hub also released a timetable of Zoom sessions which is still running to this day. Some of these activities on Zoom involve: creative writing, reading for wellbeing, relaxation and a weekly quiz. If someone is hesitant to attend the hub or is unable to join via Zoom, teleconference sessions are also available.

Area Manager, **Grace McDougall** (right) said *"Both of our Hubs are friendly, energetic and engaging environments for our service users and staff teams! It is a pleasure to spend time there!"*



"The staff are very kind and supportive, and are always there to help. I am very grateful to be a part of this community and cannot wait to see what other exciting events will happen in the future!"
- Rebekah Salisbury





Contact Us



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Dean's Quiz Answers:

1. Daniel Radcliffe
2. Richard Wilson
3. Lisbon



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