

CREATIVE PEOPLE



Your staff magazine

Issue 3: Summer 2023



Featuring
heartwarming
stories, wellbeing
information and
incentives

Support Worker Sharon Taylor
and her partner Chris at the
Glasgow Film Festival



WELCOME

Hello and welcome to the third edition of your staff magazine, Creative People.

We are delighted to bring you many more heartwarming and inspirational stories from our staff across the country. Read about our cover star Sharon Taylor on page 10, who talks about using her caring skills both in her acting career and with Creative Support. Be inspired by stories of community action, both from Lyndsey Downes who organised a clean-up of her local area, and from Sue Gardner who helped two Ukrainian families find safety.

You can also find articles to support you and your wellbeing, information about incentives and offers as a Creative Support employee, our latest staff awards and competitions, and extracts from blogs by CEO Anna Lunts.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue of Creative People and we look forward to seeing you in the next! If you have a story you'd like to share for the next issue, please get in touch with the Communications Team at communications@creativesupport.co.uk.

Easter Bonnet Competition in Stockport

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Did you know **all contracted** members of staff are now entitled to one additional day of paid leave for their birthday? See page 12 for details.





"I go to nature to be soothed, healed and have my senses put in order"
Batir Ali –Web Manager

WORK LIFE BALANCE

In the UK, two thirds of people reported that work-life balance was a crucial factor when looking for a job. A healthy work-life balance doesn't always mean a 50/50 split, as it means something different for everyone. It's important to recognise whether you have a balanced work and personal life, and what small steps you can take to manage it.



80%
of people said poor work life balance was the cause of their burnout

The first step is pausing to think about your situation. Do you feel stressed more than you feel content? Which elements are causing you unhappiness? You can use these feelings to reprioritise which elements of your life you want to change. It can be as simple as making sure you use all your annual leave, or avoiding checking your emails when you're not working.

One of the difficulties in finding your perfect work-life balance

is that it will shift depending on your situation, and you could end up in burnout trying to focus on one side over the other. Burnout is when you feel physically or emotionally exhausted. 88% of UK workers reported burnout in the last two years, and a further 80% said poor work-life balance was the cause. By ignoring the warning signs, such as procrastinating

on tasks, feeling constantly drained or having self-doubt, you can end up feeling like you're running on empty.

55% of people surveyed said they were looking for organisations that actively supported their mental health. We know it's really important to support you with whatever you're going through, and Creative Support's **Employee Assistance Programme** offers free mental health and wellbeing support for all of our staff, as well as people in your household (more on page 13). You can also have a confidential chat with your manager or HR to discuss options to help you regain your balance.

Whatever your work-life balance feels like, make sure you check in with yourself regularly to make sure your needs are being met.

GETTING OUT, FEELING GREAT!



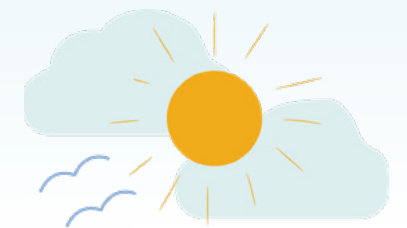
The average Brit spends 90% of their time indoors, which is around 22 hours a day. Spending time outdoors can positively impact our mental health, but did you know it can also help our sleep, breathing, and exercise? Here are some reasons why getting out can have you feeling great.



It can be hard to find the time and motivation to get outdoors, but you don't have to spend your whole day in the garden. In fact, just spending **two hours a week outdoors** can significantly boost your health and wellbeing. You could reach this goal just by taking a twenty minute walk once a day.



Take a deep breath, as being outside can help improve your breathing. Air pollutants that trigger asthma and allergies are often **two to five times higher** indoors than outdoors. You'll find the freshest air in places with a high air circulation, so taking a walk through a field will give you more relief than a river near buildings.



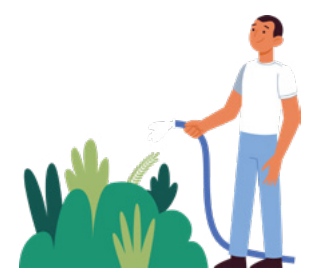
As we talked about in the last issue, exposing yourself to sunlight can improve your sleep, as it will help you feel more tired at night and help you to fall asleep faster. It affects your circadian rhythm more than electric light, as direct sunlight has **200 times** the intensity of office lights!



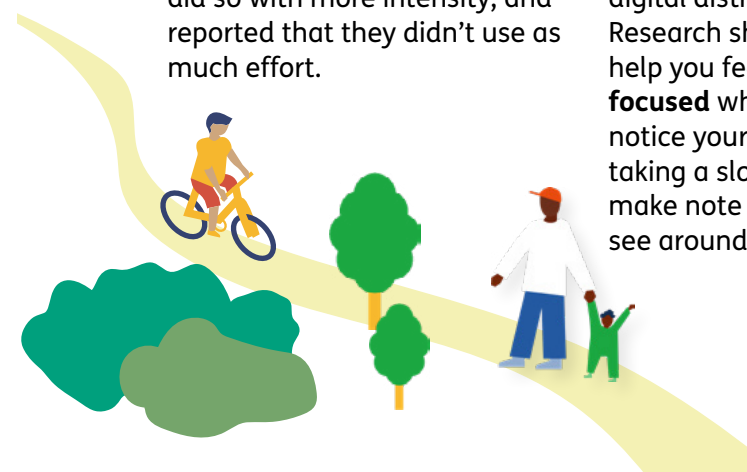
If you're a gym-goer, try taking your workouts outdoors, as research shows it's **easier and less strenuous**. They found that people who exercised outside did so with more intensity, and reported that they didn't use as much effort.



Whether you're sat in an office, or lounging on the sofa at home, having a quick break outdoors gives us some mental restoration from all the digital distractions around us. Research shows that nature can help you feel **more relaxed and focused** when taking time to notice your surroundings, so try taking a slow-paced walk and make note of everything you see around you.



There are lots of different ways to connect with the outdoors beyond just walking - you could **grow your own food** or **help out at an allotment**, do some of your regular activities outside, help the environment through **litter picking**, or **connect with animals and wildlife**. Think about what benefits you might want from spending more time in nature, and the ways you most enjoy getting out.





A DRIVING FORCE

AN EXTRACT FROM ANNA'S BLOG

Earlier this year, we organised for one of our minibuses to be driven to Ukraine to help those with disabilities get to a safe space. With the help of customer care and vehicles colleagues, the van was taken to Western Ukraine and used to safely transport people with disabilities.

The European Disability Foundation confirmed that “the situation for persons with disabilities is appalling. For example, shelters in Kiev are inaccessible, so people with disabilities are forced to stay at home, not knowing where they can go to be safe.” The Independent reported in March 2022 that “Millions of people with disabilities were feared to be ‘abandoned’ in Ukraine. Aid workers have said there is a ‘lack of transportation’ for those with disabilities, and that major organisations were not able to address their needs.”

The lack of support for people with disabilities in Ukraine really struck a chord. We had a minibus that hadn’t been used since before the pandemic and we immediately thought it could go to Ukraine and help. It has a wheelchair lift at the rear, meaning that it could help those with accessibility needs get to safety.

Dan Powell spoke with the UK Voluntary Organisations Disability

Group (VODG) which has organisational partners working in Ukraine. One of these charities was the Christian Aid Centre of Anna-Maria who required the van, and another was the Good Faith Partnership, who have since been instrumental in obtaining the minibus and arranging for it to arrive in good hands.

The ball then officially started rolling, and we could get the van road-ready! Members from the Health and Safety team kindly went to collect new chairs to increase capacity, and it received a full refurb with fresh tyres and a new battery. In early February, the van made its way to Poland, where the driver met the team from the Christian Aid Centre of Anna-Maria.

The team fully stockpiled the van with everything from toiletries and clothes to a generator and more. It will be taken to people across Lviv, the biggest city in Western Ukraine, before then being used to transport people with disabilities to safety.

The community effort to help support people in Ukraine has been nothing short of inspirational. There are many people at Creative Support who passionately supported this journey, and I hope they know that their efforts will truly make a difference to people across the country.



The van driver meeting the Christian Aid Centre Team after safely reaching Ukraine



HOSTING A UKRAINIAN FAMILY

SUE'S STORY

Sue Gardner, Service Manager in Sheffield, has shared her incredible story of her efforts to help Ukrainian refugees. Sue searched online groups to find people who needed help, using translation apps and doing all she could to assist people out of their dangerous situations and across the border. Read Sue's account below.

"We were all shocked and horrified when the war in Ukraine began on 14th February 2022, and it soon became apparent that people were desperate. I had previously offered to host an Afghan family and have always wanted to help people.

I found a big group online that was formed to link host families with people trying to find safety.

I posted that I would love to help and have two spare bedrooms. I received one message from Svetlana, a lady who was stuck in a cellar in Kharkev with her young daughter, Sophia.

They were being bombed but didn't know how to get out. When we were speaking I could hear the bombs and the planes going over.

They didn't have a cellar, so they had to go into a corridor and wedge themselves in with

mattresses so they didn't get impaled on glass. It made my skin crawl. She had one bag with her, so using a translation app I told her to get on a train and leave. We stayed in contact throughout, a lot of times through the night due to the time difference. Svetlana had never left her town before, let alone Ukraine, and I had to figure out how to get her to safety. I managed to get her to the border of Poland so she would be safe.

It was chaos when she got to the border, the queues went on for days and they had no food. There wasn't any UK Government support at the time so I had to figure out how to get her visa myself. I got her documents translated, and from there she managed to get into Germany. All the trains were free so she could get around okay, but she was terrified being in Berlin alone with her daughter at midnight. I needed to get someone to help who was closer to her, so I found a Belgian Facebook group who supported Ukrainian refugees.

Someone replied who arranged for Svetlana to get to Antwerp,

and drove her to an Italian family who lived on the edge of the city. I had two laptops open and was on the phone with interpreters who helped translate all the documents to get the visas done. In the end Svetlana decided to stay with the host family in Antwerp, as her daughter was in school there and they were happy, so it all worked out.

Ultimately though this meant I still had two rooms spare, so I posted another message in the group. A Russian lady in the UK called Robin reached out, as she was trying to help a father and son but was struggling. They sent me their documents and I got them translated prior to getting their visas, which



Sophia and Svetlana

actually came through really quickly within three weeks. That was mainly because I pursued the local MP to get the ball rolling at the London visa office. The next step was to let the local council know, as they had to run checks on my house to make sure it was suitable, and the local gas company actually came out to do tests for free.

I began applying for school places, and in the meantime the family were trying to get out of Ukraine. The Ukrainian army was sending people back over the border so that they could fight, but as Yuri was looking after Oleg, they couldn't risk sending him back. Yuri's wife stayed in Ukraine as she had an important job there, so she booked them both flights for Romania, where they then flew to the UK.

My husband and I picked up Yuri and Oleg from Luton airport in the middle of the night.

It was a bizarre experience as we couldn't communicate with each other without translation apps.

They didn't have any money, but the local council provided a £200 emergency payment. In those first few weeks I was working full time, and then coming home and spending hours doing their admin. I sorted out the son's school place and free school dinners, applied for their benefits, got Yuri his national insurance number, but it was so mind boggling as I'd never done any of this before and it was



Yuri and Oleg at Vyshyvanka Day in Derby

really difficult. We managed to get Yuri and his son a three-year visa, which meant they could stay and we could keep supporting them.

Nearly 100 Ukrainian families had been supported to live in our community, so we formed a WhatsApp group so they could all communicate. I set up a social event at the local Methodist church, who gave us a space for free. We also arranged for local health services, dentists and translators to come, to help give people advice and help get them integrated into the community.

After a few months, we knew that Yuri and his son would ultimately want their own place. Luckily my friend's family owned a flat that had just become vacant, and they graciously agreed to let them have it. Most of the furniture for the home was generously donated and we managed to furnish the whole place for practically nothing.

I still support Yuri and Oleg a lot as I attend parents' evenings and help them with their banking etc. Yuri managed to find a job as a landscape

gardener, his son is doing really well with school and they've become more independent now. I'm so happy that they're okay, but know that some people haven't been as fortunate and that more needs to be done to help.

I still keep in touch with Robin and Svetlana, and we've become great friends. We call ourselves the 'Little United Nations'. I promised them both that I will go over and meet them, and we can go on Robin's yacht and have Belgian champagne!

My Granny had taken in refugees during the Second World War, and I thought 'if she could do it then I could.' It's been a massive eye opener, and I will go to Ukraine when it's safe to go as I have every intention of seeing it for myself.

The community of host families and Ukrainians have been incredible, as everyone has come together and we've all made amazing relationships to help support each other. Throughout this journey, though it has been tough, I would do it again".



A RED CARPET MOMENT

Sharon Taylor, Support Worker in Doncaster, kicked off her acting career after a chance encounter and is now making waves in the industry. From doing background work to being a stand-in, Sharon's time in the limelight is on the rise, facing the spotlight head-on at a red carpet premiere! Despite her success, Sharon's not letting the fame go to her head, and always makes sure to count her blessings.

Sharon's partner Chris is a boxing photographer, and had previously done shoots with boxers Dominic and Brendon Ingle. Dominic ended up getting in touch with Chris to offer him the chance to be in an upcoming boxing film with actor Paddy Considine as they were looking for someone to play a photographer, and Chris asked to bring Sharon along to be an extra.



Sharon with Paddy Considine

"There were hundreds of supporting actors there," said Sharon. "Paddy spotted me and came over, I'm not sure how, maybe because I have a mohawk! The director asked me to move and I remember thinking it was because me and Chris were laughing a lot, but it was actually because Paddy wanted me to be in the shot! I was only in for a few seconds but from that I ended

up getting an agent. I've been on *Ackley Bridge*, *Emmerdale*, and I was a punk rocker in an 80's-themed film where I had a few lines."

Most recently, Sharon was standing in for Monica Dolan in *Typist Artist Pirate King*. "As a stand-in I relieve her from being on set, so I learn her script and mimic her movements so they can set up the cameras and lighting." Sharon was then invited to the *Typist Artist Pirate King* premiere in Scotland, where she got to walk the red carpet. "It was amazing, my partner came with me too as he's backed me all the way, and it's thanks to him that I got into this! Monica couldn't make it to the premiere so I joked that I was standing in for her in the film and now on the carpet as well. I got on really well with the writer and director Carol Morley, she said she saw something in me that she

absolutely loved. She told me that she's written a part for me in her next film!"

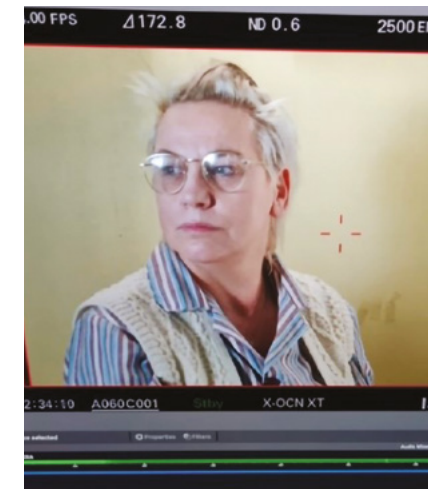
Sharon's hard-working attitude, warm character and talent is a recipe for success in the acting world, but also in her role in care. "When people were feeling down on set I'd try to bring them up or sing with them, have a bit of a joke, and hopefully that's what I do at Creative Support! It's in my nature, I'm just a very giving person. I like bringing positives out of the negatives, as you've only got one life. I think I get my attitude from my dad, he was such a positive soul. He had struggles, but there was always humour and happiness. We didn't have a lot of material things but we had the love and happiness of a wonderful father. My dad had leukaemia, and I nursed my mum in the last three years of her life, so I also have my caring side from there. My sister's a nurse and so are my aunties, I think it's just in my blood!"

When Sharon first started working in support she was a self-employed masseuse. "Covid knocked my business for

a while, and I thought I have to get out of this rut and give back somewhere." She saw the opportunity to take a part-time position at Creative Support, meaning she could continue her massage and acting work. "My gut was telling me to go for this job, and it's one of the best things I've ever done in my life. I love the staff, my manager Hannah and all the residents. I feel that I'm at home when I walk into the service in the morning. It's such a wonderful place to work and I would never leave. I love giving my support to people, we'll sing and dance and there's a lot of joy and love."

"I've always been like that, in school I was in lots of plays. I wanted to play the ugly stepsister in *Cinderella* as it had a comedy part, as I love to laugh. It comes natural to me, I wouldn't say that was acting as it's just me, I'm bonkers! My dad was like that. I always say there's no two sides to me, I'm just me."

Sharon always makes sure to count her blessings and realise her full circle moments. "It's so lovely, I feel like a lot of doors



Sharon on the set of *Typist Artist Pirate King*

are opening for me. I don't

know where it's going to take me, but I just go with the flow. Carol saw potential in me and that's a very high privilege, there's a lot of people who went to fancy schools for this, but I've just gone straight into it. I learned how to read scripts while I was on set, and I've still got a lot to learn! Monica wrote me a note saying 'you've contributed more than you'll ever know', and she even said to Carol I was the best stand-in she's ever had."

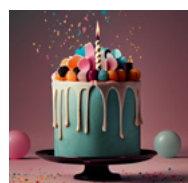
"Life is amazing. I've got a roof over my head, food in my belly, what more could you want? I never yearn for massive houses, all I want is love and happiness and beautiful people around me. If you've got that you're a rich woman. I'm a millionaire!"



Sharon with Monica Dolan

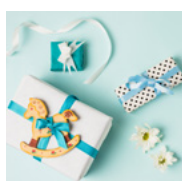
As a Creative Support employee, you're entitled to a range of benefits and incentives. Read about some of our new incentives below.

STAFF INCENTIVES



Staff Birthday Bonus

All contracted members of staff on Creative Support Terms and Conditions are now entitled to one additional day of paid leave for their birthday. This should be taken within two weeks either side of your birthday, or within a month of your return to work if you are on long-term absence. Please fill out a [Discretionary Leave Form](#) to take your extra day. We would love to see any photos of how you spent your special day!



Maternity, Paternity & Adoption Gifts

We are delighted to offer new parents a gift as part of our Maternity, Paternity and Adoption offer. Following the birth of a baby, a 'Welcome to the World' package will be sent to families to congratulate them. Parents will receive an adorable We Care baby grow and dribble bib. Adoption gifts will be bespoke depending on the age of the child. HR or your line manager will be in touch ahead of sending the gift. You can choose to opt-out of the gift.



Birthday Gift Incentive

As a token of our appreciation and to celebrate you, this year we are launching our Birthday Gift Incentive. All contracted and TUPE staff from 1st June 2023 will receive a card and box of chocolates from Creative Support to wish you well on your birthday. So if your special day is coming up soon please keep an eye out! The chocolate is dairy, gluten, nut and wheat free.



Blood Donation Incentive

We believe giving blood is incredibly important, and any member of staff who becomes a blood donor will receive £40 in Love2shop vouchers, or we can donate an equal sum to a charity of your choice. This can be redeemed every 12 months, and we want to encourage all staff to take part in this fantastic and worthy cause. Please complete an [application form](#) which can be found under 'documents' in the staff area, along with evidence of your donation. For information on how to donate blood, please visit www.blood.co.uk.

health assured

Our free Employee Assistance Programme offers advice and support for you and members of your household. They have a 24/7 service, and you can access up to 8 free one-to-one counselling sessions a year.

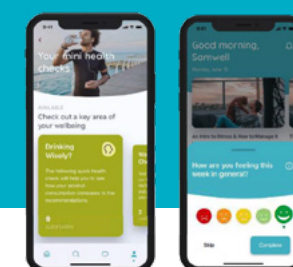
'Wisdom AI' is their new search-engine style tool for instant answers to all your health and wellbeing questions. The answers have been written by their in-house professional counselling team, so you can get real, helpful advice in an instant. You can ask specific questions or type in general topics to see some frequently asked questions.

They also have a number of **four-week programmes** to help you reach your goals.

These are on a range of topics, including quitting smoking, better sleep, weight loss, healthy eating, drinking less caffeine and improving your energy levels. The programmes come with facts sheets and tips, and a personal training schedule to monitor your progress.

As well as all this, they have podcasts, webinars, a monthly TV series and more.

Find out what our Employee Assistance Programme can do for you today by logging in to www.healthassuredeap.co.uk using the username Creative and password Support. You can call their helpline on **0800 030 5182** or **0800 028 0199**.



New Updates!

Benefits Booklet

Did you know that as a health and social care worker, no matter your role, you're eligible for discounts on the high street, entertainment and more!

You can read about our Employee Assistance Programme and more in our Employee Benefits Booklet, detailing all the benefits you are entitled to as a Creative Support Employee.

Training Voucher

As a reward for your commitment to your continuous professional development, you can receive your choice of Asda, Love2Shop or Amazon vouchers for the following:

- **£30** for completing both parts of the care certificate (knowledge and practical)
- **£50** for completing 10 e-learning modules (did you know this can be claimed every 12 months?)
- **£50** for completing our Creative Academy Diplomas (levels 2-5) or an Apprenticeship

For more info contact the training team on training@creativesupport.co.uk or visit creativeacademy.org.uk.

Refer a Friend

Staff who refer a friend to Creative Support for contracted employment can claim £200 in vouchers!



Welcome Back Grant

Employees who return to Creative Support a minimum of three months after resigning are eligible to receive £200 worth of vouchers. This is not applicable to those leaving a contracted position to join the bank team.

For more information on the Welcome Back Grant or Refer a Friend please contact Fiona.cooney@creativesupport.co.uk





This year we launched We Care, a national campaign that sets out the values and ethos that underpins everything we do at Creative Support.

The We Care values are as follows:

Welcoming
Empowering
Compassionate
Aspirational
Respectful
Effective

We hope every staff team across the organisation will reflect on how they can best embody the We Care values into their work.

We have lots of new We Care merchandise in stock for you to order. These include stickers, pens, lanyards, t-shirts and more. Hoodies are special and not for order- keep an eye out on ways to get your hands on one!

Please order via www.creativesupport.co.uk/marketing-merchandise/



We Care Awards

We are very excited to announce the We Care Awards, which recognise the individuals and teams who personify these values. Over the past seven years we proudly ran the Achieve Q awards, and honoured the contributions of 1,000 staff and 200 teams. The We Care Awards are now replacing our internal Achieve Q staff awards, which recognise staff and team outcomes.

The awards will run bi-monthly, and the first round of winners will be announced in late June.

The We Care awards will run alongside our monthly Creative People Appreciation Awards, which are appreciating your colleagues for the things they do for one another daily. The We Care Awards focus on the efforts staff make for the people we support and the great outcomes achieved.

How to Nominate

Anyone in Creative Support can submit a nomination. These can be added to with third party contributions. Check out the website for nomination deadlines. To submit a nomination you can either:

- Scan the QR code to get to our online form
- Visit our [website](http://www.creativesupport.co.uk) and download the [nomination form](#) which can be sent back by email to wecare.awards@creativesupport.co.uk or post to 'We Care Awards' at Head Office.
- We can also accept verbal nominations if required, please use the dedicated email to request this version.



SCAN
HERE

Providing detail really helps support your nominations, and who knows - you may receive one of our valued Silver or Gold Awards!

We can't wait to receive your nominations and wish you the best of luck!



500 WORDS COMPETITION



As part of Love your Library month we launched our 500 Words Competition to give you the opportunity to share your stories and write from the heart, for the chance to win £500!

Staff were asked to write 300-500 words about their time at Creative Support, and our panel of judges selected an overall winner and 10 runners-up, who each received a £20 voucher or a We Care hoodie.

RUNNERS UP

**ROBERT
'BOBBY' JONES**
Cleaning
Supervisor

**TRACEY
RICHMOND**
Community
Outreach Support
Worker

DONNA BROWN
Outreach Support
Worker

**ROSHITHA
GATTUPALLI**
Support Worker

SHAMSA HUSSAIN
Recovery Navigator

WINNER

CONGRATULATIONS TO
KATY GEE!
Senior Support Worker

Katy's moving and inspirational entry really stood out to the judges, who praised its powerful message and how we could all learn something from the people she supports:

"They've taught me how to live in the moment, to not be afraid to be who you are and to love unconditionally. They've taught me that you can always find something to laugh about, even if it's yourself... and that the most important thing in life is to be happy and to make people happy."



RUNNERS UP

**ANNAMARIA
LOMBARDI**
Relief Support
Worker

**SARAH
MARSHALL**
Personnel
Administrator

ZOE GARNER
Centre
Co-ordinator

MARIA STAUDT
Recovery Support
Worker

NOEL WOODS
Support Worker



Read all of the winning entries on www.creativesupport.co.uk/500-words-winners





THE POWER OF COMMUNITY

Lyndsey Downes, Service Director, started a Facebook group with members of her local community in Grimsby to encourage people to look after the River Freshney, a rare chalk stream. In no time the group amassed over 3,000 members, and organised a Day of Action on the 1st April. Covered by BBC News, local press, and supported by companies including Orsted and Sainsbury's, the event was a huge success and is an incredibly inspiring story showing the power of community. Read Lyndsey's story below:

"I heard about James Elliott, who is known locally as The Canoe River Cleaner. During lockdown he got put on furlough, and so he got

a canoe and took it upon himself to clean the river and do something positive in the area. He ended up attracting so much publicity that a lot of local organisations sponsor him so he can make it a part-time job. It's more than just cleaning the river; he's created a feeling that people can really make a difference.

He set up a Facebook group called 'The Freshney Comrades', which I quickly joined and supported. We split the river into sections and asked on social media if anyone wants to take responsibility for any of the areas. So many people came forward, we were blown away by the response! We litter pick our sections each week, and the council comes and collects all the rubbish from us.

We as a group get to take pride in the area, and it's a real civic movement. One of the patches in the town centre is really bad, so we wanted to hold a 'Day of Action' to blitz it in one go.

Before the day even arrived, a group called 'The Magnet Fishers' responded to our post, saying 'why wait until April?' They came down the next day all the way from Leeds, and pulled out 60 trolleys in one



The River Freshney before and after the clean up



day! Sainsbury's, whose store is along the river, came along and brought us platters of food and drinks. It was on the front page of the paper and it was on BBC Look North. It really brings people together. One member of the group posted that they saw a bench in the river, and within ten minutes someone had offered to drive to the other side of town and pull it out.

It shows what you can do with just a few posters and some publicity.

Despite the work we'd done so far, the river and surrounding areas still needed our 'Day Of Action'. We reached out to all the local businesses to help, and we got a lot of offers to provide staff and even boats. On the day, around 50 volunteers came to help us. The waste we collected was

kindly taken away by Biffa for free, and by the end of the day they'd taken over two tonnes! The Local Canoe club spent all day on the river pulling debris out of the water. Sainsbury's donated food and litter picking equipment, and we gave everyone wild flower seeds donated by Grimsby in Bloom, with some information about our group as a thank you. We also cleared a dumping waste ground around the corner that residents used for fly tipping, and Grimsby in Bloom raked the area and planted wildflowers to deter people and encourage them to love their community.

What I took home was how easy it was to organise and how much good will there is!

Just a bit of promotion on social media and some emails to local companies, and it all came together. One lady came on her own as she said her husband works all day on weekends and she has nothing to do. It was good to get someone who would've been sat at home all day to come out and make a difference. I even managed to persuade the council to put in

new bins to ensure that the area doesn't have so much litter in future. It makes such a difference when people can see the area clean and tidy, and helps people to look after it.

Further along the river our work continues as a group. We worked with another local supermarket to reinstate the £1 slots on their trolleys to stop them ending up in our beautiful stream. To ensure people can still use the trolleys, we have invested in some eco-friendly wooden tokens with our logo on to hand out to people.

It's a real labour of love and we will continue to keep making a difference.

It's all very inspiring, and instead of complaining, you can do something about it and make a change."

If you'd like to organise a clean-up event near you, or help out with Lyndsey's group in Grimsby, please get in touch at

lyndsey.downes2@creativesupport.co.uk

CAREER PROGRESSION

After finishing her psychology degree, Pia Parekh started as a support worker in Leicester 14 years ago. Since then she's risen through the ranks, progressing to project manager and then on to senior service manager, during which she even went part time to complete her Master's in neuropsychology.

Can you talk us through your journey with Creative Support?

I started about 14 years ago now, I'd just finished my undergrad in psychology and moved back home to work in Leicester, where I got a full time job with Creative Support. I worked for a year before doing my Master's in neuropsychology, and after that I moved to London and transferred to Clover Court, where I was able to move up to a manager's position!

Why did you decide to work in care?

During my undergraduate I did a placement year with children with disabilities, which I had no prior experience of. I really enjoyed it and learned so much about working with people with disabilities. The staff there gave such immense care, attention and value to their job, which I found very inspiring.

After about a year of working at Creative Support we went through the loss of one of the people we supported, which was really difficult. I had a good relationship with his mum, and she would still come to the service to see his pictures. Those things really hit home. When you're starting out in your career it really moulds your perception of how you see your work and the importance of it. It made a massive impact on me as I could see how important every day was for the tenants. Every day after he passed we would talk about all the small things we used to do with him.



When you first started, did you have career progression in mind?

After my Master's I knew I didn't want to go into academia. I wanted to do something that was a bit of both, where I could keep learning but also have hands-on experience. I did six months at Clover Court before I started managing another service, and there was so much to do when I first moved up. I think I was quite lucky that the opportunities happened at a time when I felt ready for the responsibility, and I had a lot of support from my manager, Director Mahip Singh. I set up a new service in Wandsworth which was an amazing experience. I recently started working as a senior service manager, and really enjoy being in this role.

What advice would you give to yourself just starting out?

Slow down! It's important to step back sometimes and look at the bigger picture. You might want to keep going and put your all into it, but if you step back you can allow yourself a bit of a break and see that everything's going okay. I give that advice to a lot of managers, as you need the headspace to make the right decision.

Do you have an interesting story from your time working at Creative Support that you would like to share with us? Get in touch at communications@creativesupport.co.uk



Sarah Marshall, one of our members of staff in Head Office, shares her experience with food waste app Olio, and the difference it can make.

Food Sarah received from Olio

SARAH'S BLOG; BE A FOOD WASTE HERO!

In the UK, between 6 and 10 million tonnes of food goes to landfill each year, and around half of it is still perfectly edible. This costs both our pocket and the environment, as food waste charity the Felix Project states "if it were a country, food waste [globally] would be the third highest emitter of greenhouse gases behind the USA and China."

We all agree food waste is a terrible shame, especially when so many of us are struggling with the cost of living. But how to get surplus food to people who'd eat it? This is where a brilliant little app called Olio comes in! Olio is a free food-sharing app where anyone with surplus food or household items can donate it to anyone who can use it. Whether you're in need doesn't matter – it's all about cutting waste. Olio also collects unsold food from supermarkets at closing time, and the forum buzzes with recipes and pictures of meals made entirely with "Olio-ed" food.

Olio isn't just about food waste, but cutting down consumption by sharing or passing on household items. Need a cat box for a trip to the vet? Got a tent that only gets used once a year? Put out a "Request" or "Lend" listing and see what you can find.

The difference Olio makes might surprise you. Last summer some bad budgeting left me with a £200 financial hole – and 25 days until payday. Thanks to Olio, I got through the month on only £20. I ate perfectly well with plenty of variety and fresh items, once even getting some beers. On another occasion, a lady near me requested a spare mobile phone. I was able to lend one, and she told me she had lost hers at the worst possible moment – days before a telephone interview. Even better, when she returned the phone there was good news – she'd got the job!

As well as saving food and money, there's a real positivity in knowing that you've fought

back in a small way against food waste. I always feel grateful and have a sense that the world is heading in the right direction when I sit down to a meal, knowing it came from strangers who gave it to me for free.

What's not to like about free food? Download the app – it runs on any phone from 2016 onwards – and start rescuing food, saving pounds and sharing with your neighbours.



Be sure to check out Sarah's other blog all about using a foodbank and what to expect: creativesupport.co.uk/sarahs-blog-foodbanks

TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

NEWS



INVESTORS IN PEOPLE™
We invest in people Gold

We are delighted that our training team has just been re-accredited our Investors in People Gold status, demonstrating our high standards in training and staff development. Next we will be going for platinum!



learningpool

Just to let you know, we have moved to **Learning Pool**, our new learning management software that will replace Bridge. This new system will be easier to use to track your learner pathway, with your classroom, webinars and e-learning all in one place. This will also allow managers to easily see training undertaken by their staff.

Please look out for an email from training sent to your personal email account with the subject 'Welcome to Creative Academy's Learning Platform' with details on how to create a password.

OLIVER MCGOWAN MANDATORY TRAINING



Remember to complete the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training, which can be accessed via Learning Pool. This Tier 1 training is now mandatory for all staff who require a general awareness to support autistic people or people with a learning disability.

The training is named after Oliver McGowan, whose death shone a light on the need for health and social care staff to have better training and awareness.

"The training was informative, particularly as it uses videos of experts by experience to guide you through the course. As a person working in communications, I liked that the training explains best practice around using diagnostic terms, and how the language referring to autism and learning disability has changed over time."
Lauren Woods, Marketing & Communications Manager

If you have any further questions, please contact **0161 238 7664** or email training@creativesupport.co.uk

CONGRATULATIONS!

Congrats to everyone who has worked hard to achieve their Health & Social Care vocational qualifications recently through our Creative Academy. Everyone who has completed will receive £50 in vouchers, and be celebrated in a mini award ceremony.

The following staff members have recently achieved their Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management for Adult Care:
Andrei Leonte, Andrew Munro, Denise Protty and Alistair Richmond.



Alistair Richmond

"Completing the Level 5 Diploma has been very rewarding! This course provides an opportunity to step back, look at the bigger picture of where we fit into the Social Care sector, and reflect on issues and our practice. It was a very interesting, affirming and rewarding process for me. I would like to thank my two assessors, as I could not have done it without their patience and support!"



Ruby Williams

In 2017, 15-year-old Ruby Williams was repeatedly sent home from school due to her natural hair being 'against uniform policy' and 'blocking other pupils from seeing the whiteboard'. "Am I really being sent home because my hair is growing out of my head the way it is?" she said. "People can have their hair all the way down to their hips, as long as they want – but because my hair grows out I need to cut it?"

Ruby and her family, with the support of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), fought against the school for three years and eventually won an £8,500 settlement. Her case resulted in the creation of new guidance, stating that pupils should not face disciplinary action from wearing natural hair styles in school.

Hair discrimination experienced by Black communities extends into workplaces, public places, and every element of people's lives.

According to research by Dove, nearly half of Black or mixed-race women have experienced race-based hair discrimination, and one in four Black adults had been sent home from work or faced disciplinary action as a result of their natural hair.

They also found that more than half of Black children have been sent home from school due to wearing their hair naturally or in a protective style.

Following the 2020 Black Lives Matter movement, a group of 30 young Black activists created 'The Halo Code'; the UK's first hair code designed to prevent discrimination based on hair style or texture. In order to embody the code, staff are

HALO CODE

Earlier this year we launched our first Halo Code Policy, outlining our total commitment to providing a safe and open workplace for all staff to wear their hair in protective or cultural styles without fear of discrimination. You can find the policy on the [staff area](#), and read an extract from Anna's Blog below highlighting the importance of the code.

encouraged to familiarise themselves with Afro-textured hairstyles, and avoid discriminatory language such as 'messy', or 'inappropriate.' As part of our 2020 Manifesto for Action, Creative Support is signed up to The Halo Code. We welcome all of our staff wearing protective or cultural styles without fear of discrimination, and that the texture and style of an employee's hair should have no impact on their ability to perform in their role, access opportunities or achieve career advancement.

While this new guidance is a welcome change for schools, we hope that the same measures will be rolled out across workplaces, as discrimination does not stop once someone reaches adulthood.

You can find this and a full list of our policies in the [staff area](#) of our website, under the 'Hot links' area found on the right.



FROM OKLAHOMA TO LONDON

Zoe Pittman came to Creative Support in January 2020, all the way from Oklahoma in the US. Since starting work, she has made a real impression on her team. This includes her Director Mahip Singh, who credited her as “always putting her clients first, even cancelling annual leave to cover shifts, and building up her staff members to create a warm atmosphere.” Zoe has spoken with us about her role as an Extra-Care Coordinator at Shipton House in London, and how she takes inspiration from the caring women in her life.

What makes a good day for you?

My answer is so simple: lots of good food! I’m definitely a foodie. Ideally a very good day for me would involve Mexican food- I’m from Oklahoma, and there’s a lot of good Tex-Mex in Texas. It’s not as good over here, but they try! I went back home to visit in May, which was the first time since I moved in October 2019.

Do you have a favourite memory from work?

One memory that stands out was with one client who had been stuck inside for about a year. For

her birthday last year I arranged with her family to take her out. We went for a walk around the block in the sun and she felt the fresh air and closed her eyes - it was really beautiful.

Is there anyone that inspires you?

My grandmother! She’s in her 70’s, and her and my great grandmother always find ways to give back to the community; they take in people and animals in need. People have even nicknamed her house ‘Pittman’s Second Chance Ranch’! She is the most selfless person, she’s so patient. I have her voice in the back of my head sometimes when I feel myself getting frustrated or not knowing how to respond: ‘What would Grandma Jean do?’ She is calm and patient and makes people feel safe and comfortable.

When I went to visit recently I found out my great grandma helped to manage a care home decades ago. They had a dementia facility, and when Shipton House first started it was for people with dementia, so we had that in common! It was interesting to hear how different care was back then, but we also discussed our care of people with dementia, which was pretty similar.

MEET THE PAYROLL TEAM

This year we launched Payroll Connect as a way to easily put you in touch with a member of our friendly Payroll Team to resolve your outstanding queries.

This is an accessible and personalised service which can help you with the below queries:

- Any long-term outstanding queries you feel have not been entirely resolved
- Where an issue has been rectified, but you are not sure how the outcome has been calculated
- Provide an opportunity for you to deliver feedback to the Senior Payroll team

Please note that new queries should go through normal payroll channels:

Weekly payroll
weekly.payroll@creativesupport.co.uk

Monthly payroll
queries.monthlypayroll@creativesupport.co.uk

Bank payroll
bank.payroll@creativesupport.co.uk



Payroll Connect

Payroll Connect takes place every **Thursday 10-1pm**, with 20 minute appointments. To book your appointment, please contact
megan.mitchell@creativesupport.co.uk
or call **0161 236 0829**



PAUL MITCHELL
Head of Payroll

“There are over 30 members of our busy Payroll Team, and we hope Payroll Connect can make it easier for us to help you.”



STEPHEN MYATT
Payroll Team Leader



EMMA SIMPSON
Senior Payroll Officer



GRANT KUMPOLOTA
Senior Payroll Officer



KIRSTY WILDING
Senior Payroll Officer



JOHN DEAN
Senior Payroll Officer



PETER CHEER
Payroll Expenses Coordinator

ART COMPETITION

2023 Photos, Sculpture, Mixed Media, Painting & Drawing

You can now enter this year's art competition to be featured in our 2024 Creative Support Calendar, and receive a special We Care hoodie! This competition is open to staff and service users.

Our panel of judges will choose 12 entries to represent each month, and we love to see submissions for different seasons and celebrations!

All mediums are welcome, so send us your paintings, drawings, sculptures, crochet, embroidery, photography, or anything else you enjoy making. Get creative!



Artwork from the 2023 Calendar

SEND YOUR ENTRIES BY 8TH OCTOBER

Send us a scan or high quality photo with your **name, service, and title** of your artwork to marketing@creativesupport.co.uk.



ANNA'S BLOG TAKEOVER

We hope you've enjoyed reading regular blogs from Anna Lunts CEO over the past few months, on topics including childcare, pensions, police violence and afro hair discrimination.

For 2023 we are looking to feature more '**blog takeovers**' from our members of staff. We've already had some amazing contributions, such as Natalie's blog about autism and education, Kizzy's blog on finding family, and Sarah's blog about foodbanks.

If you have a topic you feel passionate about, then get in touch with the Communications Team via communications@creativesupport.co.uk. You can write your blog yourself, co-write it with our team, or suggest a topic you would like the team to put together for you.

You can find all of our blogs on the 'News and Blogs' section of our website, under 'Anna's Blog' on the right.

CONTACT US



communications@creativesupport.co.uk



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