

## Inclusion Gloucestershire December 2025 Newsletter

### Item 1

A message from the Director of Fundraising and Insights, Emily Luckham.

Over the last few months, the research team at Inclusion Gloucestershire have been very busy. The team has been sharing what people told us in the Big Survey, as well as what we found in our Barriers to Talking Therapies study (funded by the University of Gloucestershire). The response to the Talking Therapies study has been positive. Providers of talking therapies have engaged in discussions with us and we will shortly be sharing changes that these providers have told us they will make. We are excited by the enthusiasm people have to improve access for disabled people in Gloucestershire. Inclusion Gloucestershire has also created an amazing video which highlights the importance of disabled people not only participating in research but leading research. This has been shared with the University of Gloucestershire. Please do check it out yourself here:

[https://youtu.be/2vETmBIS\\_PU?si=qQ3GnKrl3Lq1rQU](https://youtu.be/2vETmBIS_PU?si=qQ3GnKrl3Lq1rQU)

### Item 2

#### **Celebrating Advocacy Awareness week in October!**

Jackie, Faye and I (Andrea) attended the one-day **Blackbelt Advocacy Conference** in Birmingham. It became very clear to me at this event that the benefits of my role as an advocate are the **simple things we do for people**, like taking time to **listen to them**, to **have their voice heard** which was mentioned at the

conference to be **beautifully human advocacy practice**. During the conference I met some familiar faces who I met online at the Blackbelt Training (Advocating with and for Gloriously Ordinary Lives) in February 2025.

To make it possible for me to attend this conference I would like to say a **big thank you** to **Travel Training Team** (Olivia, Neil and Tammy) for their support. I had two sessions of Travel Training on the trains to practice the routes, the experience of using the trains as a wheelchair user with the knowledge of passenger assistance.

I feel great pride as I have celebrated my 10 years' Work Anniversary in October working for Inclusion Gloucestershire. It was brilliant to receive a Blackbelt Advocate mug to congratulate me on 10 years.

Faye said "It was great to attend the Advocacy Conference and spend some time together as a team. Andrea has been working for Inclusion Gloucestershire for 10 years! It was good to be able to celebrate Andrea and Advocacy at such a brilliant event!

### Item 3

Your Voice is a network of self-advocates across the South West (<https://www.yourvoicenetwork.org/>). Since April 2025, Your Voice focuses on the Neurodiverse Network of self-advocates.

Our Neurodiverse Network meetings provide a safe space for autistic people, who don't have a learning disability, to share experiences and discuss issues that are important to them. Having this group is particularly important as autistic people without a learning disability find they can 'fall through the gaps'

in services or discover that services have not been designed for autistic people. The concept of self-advocacy is newer to the autistic community, than other communities.

As well as discussing issues that are important to the group, Your Voice work with the NHS to deliver feedback around important healthcare issues and potential solutions to these. The current topic we are focusing on is: *Is support better with or without a diagnosis of autism?*

We're asking for feedback on this topic from anyone who self-identifies as autistic or who has a formal diagnosis of autism. If you would like to participate, please fill in this form below. Your feedback will be anonymous unless you choose to leave your name.

[Is support better with or without a diagnosis of autism? – Fill in form](#)

#### Item 4

The UNBOXED Peer Mentoring project follows a two-year pilot project called Zig/Zag which was designed to explore and evaluate the impact of one-to-one peer support for neurodivergent adults in Gloucestershire. It is being funded by The Julie Rausing Trust and is being delivered by Inclusion Gloucestershire.

#### **What we offer**

We pair people who are discovering their own neurodivergence with a **volunteer mentor** who has their own lived experience of identifying as neurodivergent, to work together for up to 6 months. People can choose to meet face-to-face or online.

Mentors can offer solidarity and empathetic support as the mentee explores and reflects upon this important aspect of their self-identity.

We also provide opportunities for neurodivergent people who are further along in their own journey to train as a mentor to support others and develop their knowledge, skills, and networks associated with the neurodivergent community.

## **How can I get involved?**

For more information about becoming a mentor or mentee, please click on the links below.

### **Becoming a mentee**

<https://www.inclusiongloucestershire.co.uk/engagement/unboxed/becoming-a-mentee/>

### **Becoming a mentor**

<https://www.inclusiongloucestershire.co.uk/engagement/unboxed/becoming-a-mentor/>

Item 5

**Drama News**

We've been busy working with several partner organisations to bring drama, film and mindfulness to local community in the Stroud area and beyond.

Tim and Petra started a new film and drama course in May which runs Wednesday afternoons at the Trinity Rooms, Stroud. Since the new term started in September, we have welcomed several new members. We are now working with a great group of regulars, co-creating a short film based on the theme of *Change*.

Between May and July we worked with members of the Beeches Day Centre in Cashes Green. Participants enacted a Scottish folktale and we filmed lovely performances by the Group. The video is coming soon to our You Tube channel, so be sure to have a watch out for *The People of the Sea* video.

Following last year's success, we returned to the Spring Centre with more mindfulness sessions in August. Working with the children in the mornings and adults in the afternoon, Tammie, Tim and Petra provided more than 40 participant places over our 3 days at the Centre.

## Item 6

### **Poetry workshop - a taster session at the Women's Wellbeing Hub**

In November Halima Malik facilitated a poetry workshop with the Women's Wellbeing Group. Initially all the women said that they love to hear poetry but had never even considered writing it and were shy and nervous. Halima asked them to think about their childhood memories and worked closely with anyone who had difficulty writing to ensure everyone took part in a way that worked for them. The women wrote about and shared childhood

memories that were thought provoking, uplifting and inspirational in three languages!

*“I never thought that poetry would make me think in a different way”*

*“We need to do more of this! I feel like I have just started”*

*“In my childhood, we never encouraged or had this opportunity to look back at fond memories. My childhood was about learning, duty and obligation.”*

Others said the session had made them realise that they have locked away their own wants. They spoke about finally being able to think about themselves - not their parents, not family or community, not about their duty to their husband or in-laws. It was an emotional session. At the start of the workshop, women were guarded and felt they had nothing to contribute but by the end of the session they felt heard and empowered, and wanting more.

Item 7

## **Forest of Dean Hub News**

The Forest Hub explored the local woodland with an Autumnal trip to Beechenhurst for a mindful walk. The scenery was beautiful, and we enjoyed being in nature. We're now getting ready for Christmas and had great fun this week at our Christmas party. We had carol singing with a local artist and musician, John Slater and his accordion. We also say goodbye to our location at the Salvation Army building and we will miss the team there who have hosted the forest hub for over 7 years. We will keep a strong connection with the Salvation Army and they are going to host

us for a singing performance, following our singing course with ArtShape in March 2026, so we will have a great audience!

## Item 8

### **IG Training and Development**

#### **Want to improve your inclusivity and reach?**

Become Inclusion Gloucestershire accredited by signing up to one of our training and consultancy packages!

- Our aim is to improve inclusion, health and well-being, services and support for people facing disabling barriers.
- Our training is developed and led by people living with a disability, autism, mental ill health or are neurodivergent, which means we are Experts by Experience. This is what sets us apart.
- Our training experiences have impact; we get people fully involved, challenge attitudes and change behaviour.

To view our full list of packages, click the attachment!

Register your interest [here](#),

Or visit our [website](#)!

## Item 9

### **Join us!**

Become a member of Inclusion Gloucestershire:

<https://www.inclusiongloucestershire.co.uk/become-a-member/>

or phone 01452 234003

Work with us – check out our latest vacancies:  
<https://www.inclusiongloucestershire.co.uk/jobs/>

Hover and click on the icons below to:

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Item 10

## **Trustee Roles**

We are looking for more trustees to join our Board who have lived experience of a learning disability. Please contact [info@inclusion-glos.org](mailto:info@inclusion-glos.org) or phone 01452 234003 to find out more about this exciting charity leadership role!