

Volunteer & Advocacy NEWSLETTER

Issue 4 May 2026



A conversation with Courtney Jaynes.

What is Access Social Care (ASC)?

ASC is an organisation set up with the aim to give people free legal advice and training about their social care rights. ASC have also created a free online tool called AccessAva.

AccessAva is robot (sometimes called a chatbot). It can give you information and guidance about your social care rights 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

AccessAva's content is regularly reviewed by qualified lawyers. By asking you some questions the chatbot will give you advice on social care issues, creating, for example, template letters.

You can find out more about AccessAva and the work of ASC on pages 3 & 4 of this newsletter.

What is the purpose and impact of the work that you carry out with Inclusion Gloucestershire? How does your role link in with the charity around Inclusion Gloucestershire's Advocacy, Mental Health, and Neurodivergence projects?

I am currently on a secondment role as an advice coordinator, liaising between Access to Social Care and Inclusion Gloucestershire, to help those living with mental health needs and autism get the help they need when they feel their needs are not being met.

Courtney's role is in two parts: one is working on research on her own, and the other involves interviewing different organisations: such as Healthwatch, CASA, Kingfisher Treasure Seekers and the members of MHELO.



What themes are coming out through the project?

The themes that Courtney found through the research were:

1. People not knowing what social care is.
2. Issues being faced by those with mental health issues not being assessed properly.
3. A lack of reasonable adjustments or appropriate support.
4. Situations not reaching the Section 42 criteria for safeguarding enquiries.

What are you hoping the outcomes of the research to be:

I am creating a training programme to be provided in two sessions: the first about the Care Act (2014), how to access social care and further information. The second part is to find research for case studies. Courtney hopes that from delivering this training, they will see more referrals of people who need help accessing social care and who have lived experience of mental ill health and autism.

Courtney has also been working with the Inclusion Gloucestershire advocacy team. Courtney has had tentative success in signposting two clients to the right service and feels that she has gained valuable experience through this process.

What are your hobbies and interests outside of Inclusion Gloucestershire?

Courtney enjoys Korean drama and going to the gym for strength training.

New and FREE service in Gloucestershire

Did you know?

If you are supporting (ADULT) family, friends or neighbours with daily tasks due to their care and support needs and you are not contracted to do so, you are an unpaid carer! Many people help others with everyday tasks like washing, cleaning, shopping, getting out and about, communicating and much more because the person they are helping struggles to do these things as a result of their physical and / or mental ill health – this includes all kinds of disabilities.

Did you know?

Individuals with care and support needs (all the tasks mentioned above!) are **entitled to a social care assessment and may have the right to support from their local authority?** People who help individuals with care and support needs are **entitled to a Carers Assessment with their local authority.** Here at Access Social Care, we hear so many examples of unpaid carers having to reduce hours at work (or even give up employment completely) to care for others with needs. Long term caring can impact hugely on the unpaid carers finances, health and wellbeing – often unpaid carers become ill themselves as a result of the responsibilities.

Our new service, **Peer Navigator Network** is here to help and available online and within your local communities. We support people to know their rights, understand their rights and to access their rights – including assessments and care packages. This service is completely FREE.

Our Peer Navigators are highly trained and have personal lived experiences of contacting, accessing and navigating the social care system. They use award-winning technology to provide unpaid carers with information, resources and even letters to submit to their local authorities. Once you have contacted a Peer Navigator, they will stay in touch and stick with you through your journey with adult social care services until an appropriate outcome is agreed and you have full access to support from your local authority. They will help you to understand each stage of the process so that you don't feel confused and help you to understand any letters you receive from the local authority.

If you, or someone you know may be struggling or would like to know more about how we can help, don't hesitate to get in touch and we will link you with a Peer Navigator who will look at how we can support you.

Kindly written by: Sharon Sharman (Peer Navigator Co-Ordinator) & Dave Evans.

How a Peer Navigator might be able to help...

FREE SUPPORT FOR CARERS OF ADULTS

If you feel unsure, confused or are struggling to understand what you are entitled to and how to communicate with your local authority please get in touch and we will organise a time that is suitable for a conversation with your Peer Navigator.



If you help another adult in any of these ways we may be able to help you.



Helping around the home

With washing, getting dressed or getting to and from the toilet safely or Cooking, cleaning, shopping or laundry



Helping to get out and about

to appointments or to meet with friends and family, or to get to community groups



Helping people with budgeting

paperwork or telephone calls



Helping people who care for others

Looking after another adult so the person who normally cares for them can get some time out or caring for children because their carers have physical or mental health barriers

PEER NAVIGATOR NATIONAL NETWORK

Access Social Care is a legal rights charity, supporting people and carers across the country to understand their rights in adult social care support and to achieve fair and equal access to support. Our Peer Navigators are based within your local community and can offer support online or, where possible, face to face at a community venue or carers group. The service is FREE and is designed to help you to understand what you and the person you care for are entitled to from adult social care services. We can support you to:

- Contact and communicate with adult social care
- Understand your rights and entitlements
- Create letters to send to the local authority
- Request a social care assessment for the person you care for
- Request a carers assessment for yourself and support you through the process

For more information please email enquiries@accesscharity.org.uk
Please mark the email FAO: Peer Navigator Coordinator
ASC Website: <https://www.accesscharity.org.uk/>

Speak Up Group Updates

Below is some feedback and themes arising from speak-up groups the advocacy team have run in the last year:

Housing

People with disabilities feel like they're not listened to.

Access needs are not always met when housing is offered.

People struggle with completing paperwork (the Inclusion Gloucestershire advocacy team can help).

The forum theatre style worked well – people respond well when they can be actively involved in the performance.

Retired people & accessing healthcare:

This was the second forum theatre style speak up group and 21 people attended in person.

People said this gave them the chance to practice how to communicate with medical professionals.

People liked to be able to talk about their experiences.

Access to Public Transport:

The advocacy team were about to refer to the Travel Training team were needed.

It was good for Inclusion Gloucestershire to hear about the difficulties people are facing.

We were able to see first hand the isolation some people are in due to the inaccessibility of some of the areas in Gloucestershire.

Going forwards....

Watch this space for the dates for the next year. We aim to have one speak up group every three months.

Follow us on social media to find out when they are on, or email: advocacy@inclusion-glos.org and ask to be added to our distribution list and bet the first to know when the speak up groups are happening!

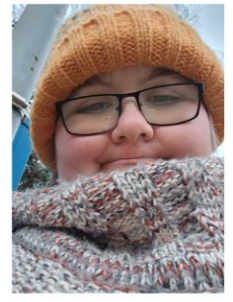
Volunteering with Inclusion

Gloucestershire

A brief visual interpretation of feedback of volunteer experiences while with Inclusion Gloucestershire:



Out & About In Gloucestershire



By: Elisabeth Wall

In Gloucestershire there are activities held on a monthly, weekly or daily basis. Why not try one and have the opportunity to gain new skills and friends along the way.:

Symonds Yat (and the Forest of Dean): explore trails around Symonds Yat and the Forest of Dean. Footpaths are generally flat, well laid and suitable for those with disabilities and who use a wheelchair. These areas include: the Speech House Woods, Mallards Pike, Cyril Hart Arboretum, Cannop Ponds, and Symonds Yat Rock.

Gloucester Park : keep it simple and enjoy your local parks in your area as spring has sprung with colourful daffodils and other flowers popping up!

Gloucester & Sharpness Canal: 16 miles of canal paths through the countryside passing the Barge Graveyard in Purton to the Stables Café (GL2 7LA) in Saul Junction and the Black Shed Café at Patch Bridge (GL2 7BP) for a nibble along the way!

Fair Shares: offer an accessible for all gentle park walk in Stratford Park, Stroud. Meet ups are twice a month, apart from December, January and August.

The Museum of Gloucester helps to look after nearly a million objects that are important to Gloucestershire as a whole. From April 2026 the Museum will be open 4 days a week. There is level access for all with a lift to the first floor and it has free admission.

Jet Age Museum: (Meteor Business Park, Cheltenham Road East, GL2 9QL). Free entry. A museum to look at vintage planes and aviation artifacts from the past. The museum is wheelchair accessible throughout, but there are small steps to enter the cockpits etc.

Bourton-on-the-Water to Lower Slaughter: a short walk through this classic Cotswold village featuring honey-coloured cottages and the parish church. The walk is 1.5 miles.



AgeUK Gloucestershire: offers two 30 minutes walk: one in Mitton (Marina Court, Trafalgar Road, Tewkesbury, GL20 5AY), the other in Northway (Northway Parish Community Hub, GL20 8QG). No more than a mile walk. Mitton is every Monday at 10:30am; Northway every Friday at 10:30am. There is a chance to socialise with staff and volunteers afterwards.

Catch A Smile: (Elmore Lane West, Stonebench, Gloucester GL2 3NW). Open to all including those with disabilities to learn how to fish and enjoy outdoor spaces. It is wheelchair accessible. Camping is available but call-in advance for availability and prices. Fishing is £10 per person which includes both equipment and bait. They are open Thursday to Sunday from 9:30 am but do check on their website or Facebook page for further information. For booking details call 07423236640 or email: enquiries@catchasmile.co.uk

Out & About in Gloucestershire



By: Elisabeth Wall

Online Creative Wellbeing: (run by ReConnect Gloucestershire): online groups sessions which offers a safe space to allow individuals to self care through several activities, including:

Creative Journaling

(Wed, 12:30pm – 2:30pm)

Creative Wellbeing

(Mon 7pm – 9pm)

Mindfulness Meditation (Tues 10:30am – 11:30am) and peer support.

Support for those in Gloucestershire who feel that they are isolated due to anxiety, long term health issues, disability, loss, financial hardship, transport, or from caring responsibilities.

For more information visit Your Circle: yourcircle.org.uk/NewsItems/Details/692

Breathe In Sing Out:

weekly singing group in Lydney and Monmouth. Open to anyone living with breathlessness and long-term lung conditions. Venues are accessible and online. 12 weeks are free for some conditions.

Lydney Community Centre, Naas Lane, Lydney, GL15 5AT. Thursday 2pm – 3pm. £4 or what you can afford.

Bridges Centre, Drybridge House, Monmouth, NP25 5AS. Thursday 11:30am – 12:30pm. £4 or what you can afford. For more information visit:

asthmaandlung.org.uk/groups-support

Stroud Gentle Grief Walks: walk around Standish Woods. 1.5 miles and finish with a hot drink. Monthly meetups. First walk is free then £10. With a trained Grief & Loss Practitioner.

For more information visit this website: veronicafrances.co.uk

Coleford Music Memory Café: somewhere to listen to music and sing led by a musician or a small group of musicians. Open for anyone with a diagnosis of dementia or memory loss, and family or carers can attend. Meetings are the first Wednesday of the month 10:30am – 12:30pm. For more information email: colefordmemorycafe@gmail.com

Sunflower Suicide Support: Peer Support Group offers:

- Art Club on the first three Wednesday mornings a month from 10 – 12 in Stonehouse.
- Creativity Workshops: varied workshops on the last Friday of the month from 1 – 3pm.
- Lunch club: monthly on second Monday of the month from 12pm – 2pm across various locations around Gloucestershire.
- Storms Walks: bi-monthly walks on Sundays at various locations throughout Gloucestershire.

Contact: 01453 826990 or email: info@sunflowersuicidesupport.org.uk

Wellington Aviation Museum – Bourton Road, Moreton-in-Marsh, GL56 0HB. Open every Sunday 10am – 4pm from Easter Sunday to mid-November. Adults £3.50, free entry to those under 15.

Enclosed in an old Victorian school building site a treasure trove of RAF memorabilia and aviation art. This was the result of one man's passion and pride with having served in the Royal Air Force and has proven invaluable record of how the Second World War had an impact on Moreton-on-Marsh and similar areas.

Activities &

Mental Health

By: Elisabeth Wall.

This spring, why not enjoy these activities to help boost your serotonin and creativity levels.

Enjoy some leaf peeping in the forest or woodlands in your area. Visit Westonbirt and Batsford Arboretum, and the Forest of Dean Sculpture Trail.

Inclusion Gloucestershire's MHELO (Mental Health Led Opportunities) project offers a lot of helpful advice in their Self Care Toolkit for how to cope with Mental Health, including some gentle yoga poses, such as Child's Pose, Reclined Butterfly, and Legs Up The Wall to help stretch both the body and the mind.

If you require a safe space or support The Cavern and Rethink Gloucestershire are regularly available and are there to listen, play board games, adult colouring, and informal social activities to help combat isolation with other like-minded peers.

Alternatively, why not utilise the Gloucestershire Health and Wellbeing College who offer free peer led educational courses and workshops to allow you to live with your health conditions.

Gloucester Cathedral offers a **Re-frame Your Now™ Mindful Photography** course which allows the participant to feel connected and be creative at the same time.

This can be done on your own or with other people, (if want a gentle challenge!)

The programme allows you to connect to nature and the environment that you live in by carrying out various tasks every day for a week with the ability to carry them out on your own.

On day one, it suggests to use your sight to look at a colour of your choice and then create five mindful photos of that include that colour. On day 5, as another example, it suggests to use your taste buds to look again at food in a different way. It suggests to pick a meal that you would like to photograph and create 5 photos of it – from the preparation to the eating covering the whole process. The process is designed to be fun, creative, and see the world in a different way, with minimum tech experience.

For further information about the course, visit:


<https://a.storyblok.com/f/114140/x/95151691f7/mindful-photography.pdf>

Useful Contacts




PALs - 0800 0151 548

NHS Patient Advice and Liaison Service offers confidential advice, support and information on health-related matters.



Victim Support - 0808 281 0112



POhWER - 0300 456 2370

Statutory Advocacy provider for Gloucestershire. This is different to community or peer lead advocacy that Inclusion Gloucestershire provides.



CAB – 0808 189 6280

Citizens Advice Bureau



CASA - 01452 317460

Community Autism Support & Advice across Gloucestershire for all adults with Autism.



GL Communities - 01452 505544

Advice & Resource Centre / Matson – Gloucester



GGLC - 07942383275


Gloucestershire Gay & Lesbian Community



Gloucestershire Service Directory - for care, support, places and people: <https://www.yourcircle.org.uk/>



Gloucestershire's Drug & Alcohol Services –
01452 223 014




Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service (GDASS) – 01452 726570 or 08082000247




Emergency Homelessness Assistance –
01452 396396



Gloucester and District Samaritans – 116 123.



The Cavern (Kingfishers Treasure Seekers):
mental health drop ins 6pm to 10pm every night.



Can You See Me – Ivy House, 94, Eastgate Street, GL1 1QN.
Community support for the Boating community of Gloucestershire.
www.canyouseeme.uk or enquiries@canyouseeme.uk

INCLUSION GLOUCESTERSHIRE

BIGGER DREAMS ► BETTER LIVES ► BRIGHTER FUTURES

Thank you from our Volunteer Coordinator, Paul

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our contributors to this edition of the newsletter and also to our newsletter volunteer Elisabeth for collating the content.

With acknowledgement and thanks to our Advocacy teams Partners:

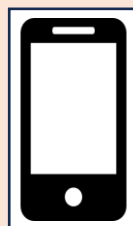
Access Social Care, Building Circles, Cheltenham Borough Homes, Gloucestershire Constabulary, Gloucestershire University, Leonard Cheshire, National Star College, Novalis Trust and Severn Wye Warm and Well.

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