

# Volunteer & Advocacy NEWSLETTER

Issue 1 2025

## Advocacy work, in partnership with Leonard Cheshire.



### Members of our Advocacy team discuss plans.

As part of our collaboration with Leonard Cheshire, Kay, Nick and Dave make up some of the team that provide valuable insights and contributions to our advocacy work. This work may involve supporting others to achieve their goals or to have a voice, such as with Speak Ups.

The Speak Ups involve volunteers sharing their experiences on a wide range of important topics that are known to be challenging to the wider community. The Advocacy team also provide a training programme for volunteers who are keen to be befrienders or give one-to-one support for a range of challenges that people face.

Our Advocacy work has grown over the past five years and has proven itself to be a vital part of the work that Inclusion does, as it provides helpful insights for people experiencing a range of disabling barriers in a cohesive and meaningful way. This allows the Advocacy team to inform and create positive changes in service provision.

Working alongside Advocacy team members from Leonard Cheshire in the year ahead, there is planning for further one-to-ones, Speak Up groups alongside the Drama team, training, and events, to widen the reach of our service.

# Cheltenham Jazz Festival

## Volunteer Kay on the joy of volunteering in more than one place.



Our advocacy volunteer Kay has been supporting people since 2023 to speak up and be heard and is now kindly offering her time to Inclusion as a befriender, helping to support people to engage in community activities.

Kay's outgoing character has enabled her to be a valued volunteer at Cheltenham Festival too.

Often people refer to the horseracing when they hear of Cheltenham Festival, this however, is not the only festival that Cheltenham is renowned for. This year is the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the town being home to some of the biggest and best arts and culture festivals in the country, and each year the Cheltenham festivals are responsible for

organising four different festivals which take place in and around Cheltenham. These annual festivals are the Jazz Festival, the Science Festival, the Music Festival and the Literature Festival.

Three times a year a festival venue springs up, including performance venues and meeting spots, catering to suit all tastes, and information points offering a vibrant opportunity to enjoy the enthusiasm of everyone involved. As the festivals have become popular, they have become bigger and bigger and receive many thousands of visitors from near and far every year.

The festivals, however, would not be able to offer such wide-ranging and enjoyable activities without the input and support of the many volunteers who give up their time and energy to help make this happen. One such volunteer is Kay Torres, a wheelchair user who lives in supported living in Cheltenham. Since Kay was at school, she has enjoyed being involved in helping others achieve things, and this has led her to being involved in a number of different volunteering opportunities. Whilst visiting the festival she saw the volunteers hard at work and enquired how she could get involved. Kay was given an opportunity following an informal chat and interview, to experience a volunteering session, and the rest as they say is history.

Kay's role at the festival includes checking tickets on the door, signposting visitors to get to the right places, and helping with enquiries and general marshalling duties. She says that the majority of the festival is accessible to all, and that this year the accessibility is increased with a voice recognition system. This offers simultaneous transcription of what people say and is shown on screens at various venues. Whilst all the volunteers benefit from being given some free tickets to shows, her main satisfaction comes from being part of a team that does a worthwhile and necessary job, without whom the festivals would not be able to take place.

**Article by Dave Evans**

# Receiving Recognition

## British Empire Medal



The Newsletter team recently sat with Vicci Livingstone-Thompson to talk about her recent award of the British Empire Medal!

The British Empire Medal is an award given for outstanding service to a local community. It can be given for charitable work, voluntary activity, or innovative work.

Vicci was recognised for her charity work for disabled people and with individuals living with mental health conditions in Gloucestershire.

The work that Vicci carried out in the setting up of a disabled people's organisation in 2013, and then leading Inclusion Gloucestershire as CEO since 2018, resulted in Vicci being recognised for this medal.

To receive the British Empire Medal Vicci will have a presentation led by the Lord Lieutenant who is the King's representative in Gloucestershire, which will be held at Highnam Court in April. Vicci, along with her friends and family, have also been invited to a Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace in May too! It was disclosed in the interview, that Vicci had to keep it a secret from her family for a month!

Vicci said that she was pleased to "shine a spotlight on what disabled people can achieve and what we do at Inclusion Gloucestershire". Vicci went on further to say that she was "lucky to do a job that I love", and that she "didn't do it for awards". Vicci explained that when she was offered the award, she had to think carefully whether it was right to accept, as a lot of what Inclusion Gloucestershire do is a team effort. Vicci added; "While I feel honoured and appreciative, was it in line with my personal values to accept, and I thought a lot about the name of the award and whether I could be proactively anti-racist and accept it with the word 'empire' in it." However, after much deliberation and research Vicci found that disabled people are the most underrepresented group to receive an honour, and it was important to create a narrative for what disabled people can do.

Vicci went on to say that she knew of two other people in Gloucestershire who received awards at the same time as her: Pippa Jones from Create Gloucestershire who is receiving an MBE, and Nick Gazzard for setting up the Hollie Gazzard Trust, who will become an OBE.

As a last comment Vicci stated; "Lots of disabled people don't get the recognition that they deserve, so I feel very lucky to receive this award, but there are a lot of other people that I work with everyday that deserve an honour too."

By: Elisabeth Wall



# Life in the miND

a neurodivergent podcast



A neurodivergent podcast  
validating people's lived experiences of neurodivergence.

We talk with various guests about their personal relationship with neurodivergence. We delve into a variety of topics and engage with the broader community.



[www.lifeinthemind.podbean.com](http://www.lifeinthemind.podbean.com)



[www.lifeinthemind.co.uk](http://www.lifeinthemind.co.uk)



[podcast@inclusion-glos.org](mailto:podcast@inclusion-glos.org)



[@life.inthemind](https://www.instagram.com/lifeinthemind)



**INCLUSION**  
GLOUCESTERSHIRE  
BIGGER DREAMS • BETTER LIVES • BRIGHTER FUTURES

## Introducing...

Life in the miND series 2 episodes 1-7 are now available and we would love to be able to get the word out! 😊

**Please share amongst your contacts and if you listen on Apple music or Spotify please rate or review the podcast, it all helps us to reach out to a wider audience and spread the word!**

For all episodes of Life in the miND please see and share the links below:



Listen: <https://lifeinthemind.podbean.com/>



Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/@Life.inthemind>

Website: [www.lifeinthemind.co.uk](http://www.lifeinthemind.co.uk)

And follow us on our social medias:

**Facebook page:** [www.facebook.com/Life.inthemindpage/](https://www.facebook.com/Life.inthemindpage/)

**Our Instagram:** @life.inthemind

**Our Tiktok:** @life.inthemind

# Food Banks Around Gloucestershire

By: Elisabeth Wall



**For those suffering hardship at any time there are resources out in the community to help.**

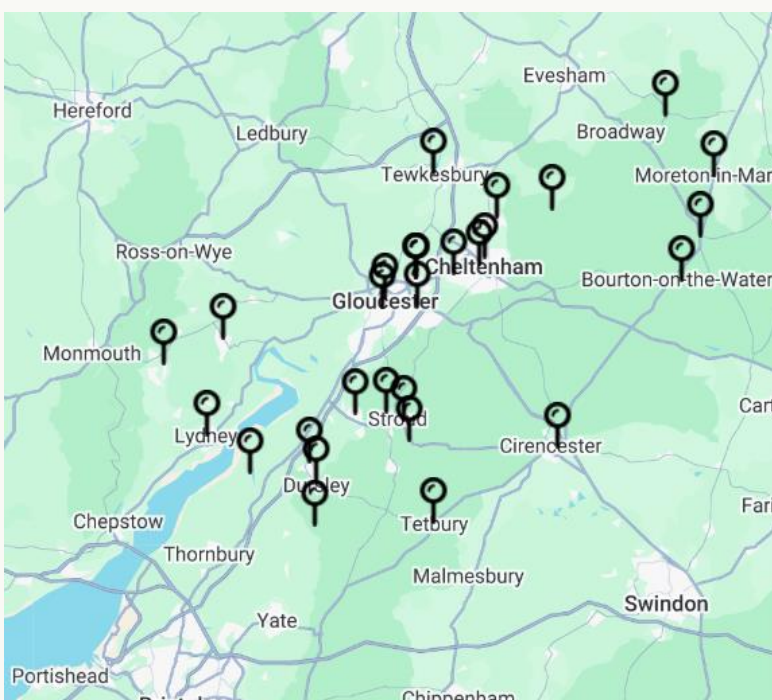
Referral agencies such as Citizens Advice, housing support officers, children's centres, health visitors, social services and other local charities can all help source food vouchers within the county, with some offering home delivery as well. They will also offer advice on housing issues, navigating the benefit system or help source additional grants that you may be entitled to.

If the above organisations recognise that you are struggling to afford the essentials, a foodbank voucher will likely be offered. The referral agency will record your details to help complete the voucher which will, in turn, help them to identify the cause of your crisis and offer practical guidance. Once a voucher has been offered, you are entitled to a minimum of three days of emergency food at your nearest foodbank centre.

According to a food bank local to the Forest of Dean, vouchers will often be issued to:

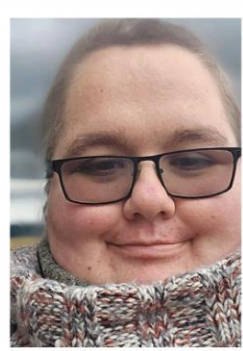
- People who have lost their job recently who are not in receipt of Universal Credit or other benefits.
- Homes where an unforeseen expenditure occurs that leaves the household short of essential funds.
- The vulnerable who cannot afford heating or to eat.
- Also, families where children will otherwise go hungry.

## Food Banks Around Gloucestershire:



# Food Banks Around Gloucestershire

By: Elisabeth Wall



## Locations of Food Banks around Gloucestershire:

### Cheltenham Food Bank Main Centre

(Cheltenham Elim Church, 115-117 St. George's Road, Cheltenham, GL50 3ED). Tel. No: 01242 5700080. Open times: Tuesday 11am – 1pm; Wednesday 10:30am – 3pm.



**Gloucester: The George Whitefield Centre** (collection of parcels by appointment only) (George Whitfield Centre, 107 Great Western Road, GL1 3NF). Tel. No.: 01452 309683. Open: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 10am – 3pm.

**Coleford Food Bank** (The Salvation Army, Broadwell).  
Open Times: 10am - 12pm.



**Stroud, The Octagon** (Farmhill Lane, Paganhill, Stroud GL5 4BX) Collections  
Wednesdays, 1pm – 2pm.

### Moreton In Marsh

(Congregational Church, Oxford Street, GL56 0LA). Open: Tuesdays 10am – 12pm.

### Cirencester Foodbank Centre

(Cirencester Opportunity Group, Beeches Road, Cirencester GL7 1BW). Open Thursday, 1:15pm – 3:15pm.

## Gig Buddies! in Gloucestershire

By: Dave Evans

**A volunteering opportunity** that can benefit people with learning disabilities is offered by 'Gig Buddies'. These are volunteers who offer to help people get out and about to concerts and events not only at festivals but throughout the year.

This can help ensure that everyone can be supported to discover and enjoy the thrill that can only be gained from experiencing a live event as it happens.

Gig buddies in Gloucestershire are supported by the Building Circles charity and more information can be found on their website:

<https://gigbuddiesgloucestershire.org.uk/>

# Riding for the Disabled

## A Therapeutic Recommendation

**By Nick Howorth**

Riding for the Disabled was started in 1969, to improve the lives of disabled people and horses. They are a major UK charity for physical disabilities and give a lasting impact from the therapeutic use of horses.

They have trained staff and provide therapy for core strength, balance and coordination and well-being boosts happiness.

They support 25,000 disabled people through activities including riding and carriage driving and the client doesn't need any experience. They have over 137,000 volunteers and 1,700 qualified coaches helping within more than 450 riding centres. The local centre is at Cheltenham Racecourse, helping to build confidence in equestrian skills and achievement.

Riding for the disabled have an arena for use during the bad weather and an outside area that they use during the nicer weather. They also have quiet corners that clients can sit in.

Horse and groundwork sessions with grooming is provided, giving participants quality time with the horses, and valuable and knowledgeable lessons in equine welfare.

When riding it has a great sense of being part of a team because the rider can't get too close to the rider in front as it could scare the horse in front. It also helps to improve movement because the rider moves with the horse and the instructor gives instructions, for instance raising one arm and then the other.

I recommend riding as a wonderful way to build balance, confidence, coordination, muscle tone and friendships.





# The Everyman Theatre

by Dave Evans



## Dave's experience of visiting the Everyman Theatre in Cheltenham.

Getting out and about is an important part of life for everybody, but especially important for those people who may need a little extra support in going somewhere. Whilst most people can take many things for granted, others amongst us need to be a little bit more prepared and thoughtful over what we do and where we go.

Finding accessible places is an important part of many wheelchair users' everyday life, and often they need the extra support which can be provided by volunteers willing to help people keep active and involved in wider community activities. The Everyman Theatre in the heart of Cheltenham is somewhere that offers a range of entertaining nights, and in common with many other entertainment venues, enables the support by providing free tickets for those accompanying people with a disability. Whether it's a drama, musical, Christmas panto, tribute band or a comedy act there really is something that can appeal to all tastes, ages and interests.

The theatre is accessible and has a number of dedicated wheelchair spaces at the end of designated rows of seats where you can be part of the audience. The assistance ticket provides seats for the volunteer next to the wheelchair user so that support and help to the person is easy and can be completed as required.

Many theatres and cinemas are aware of the requirements that some people may have for a different approach to enjoying public spaces and offer relaxed sessions for people who may find it difficult to keep their attention focused for very long.

So, if you volunteer and help people to get out and about then check out the programme at the Everyman Theatre, where there really is something for everybody!



# Stroud Film Festival



*Some of our drama members / event volunteers and project workers.*

We're thrilled to share that Dramatic Change had the wonderful opportunity to take part in the Stroud Film Festival at the Trinity Rooms in Stroud! It was a fantastic event, where we had the chance to showcase some of our films with introductions from our team.

Following the screening, we hosted a Q&A session with some of our staff and members. Three of our talented drama members generously volunteered their time to be part of the panel. They spoke clearly and confidently and represented Inclusion Gloucestershire brilliantly. We're incredibly proud of them!

It was also a pleasure to see so many familiar faces in the audience – other drama members, colleagues, and friends – supporting us and helping make this event happen. A big thank you to everyone who attended, and to all those who worked behind the scenes to bring it to life.

# Upcoming Course

We're excited to continue partnering with the Trinity Rooms in Stroud, and we have even more to look forward to. In May, we'll be launching a Forum Film Course, a unique blend of forum theatre and film making.

If you're interested in taking part, we have plenty of spaces available. No experience is needed. Please get in touch if you would like to know more.

We're also on the lookout for a **volunteer** to help support the running of the group. If you're excited about what we do and would like to know more, we'd love to hear from you.

You can contact us via email:

[drama@inclusion-glos.org](mailto:drama@inclusion-glos.org) and phone: 01452 234003



# Upcoming Productions

The Grange film makers have finished working on their film exploring what it means to “have a voice”. We were lucky enough to see a trailer at the Stroud Film Festival and can't wait for the full film to be released in the next few weeks! The Grange will be hosting an official showing of the film, but it can also be watched on our YouTube channel or via our Instagram or Facebook page.

The Gloucester group are continuing to work on a live performance about the benefits and challenges of staying safe on the internet. We are hoping this will be performed in Gloucester in July and look forward to sharing more details soon.





# Focusing on the Big Topics

## Focus Groups Following Our Big Survey

We recently held a Speak Up group on the topic of Access to Mental Health and Wellbeing which was as a result of the Big Survey 2024 carried out by the Research Team. This was the first one we have done in our new office, and we are pleased that we were able to offer it online as well as in person as we know people have different preferences of how they attend.

We had a good turnout of people and a great discussion about the different mental health services people have accessed in the past along with their views about whether they found them helpful or easy to access. The research team were able to gather lots of information in addition to the Big Survey 2024, which will be used to support the report they are putting together.

We have also held a focus group about discrimination, which was an enlightening experience where everyone learnt something, with all participants contributing to discussion.

We hope people found attending these events beneficial and would encourage people to keep an eye out for future Speak Up groups throughout the year. If you would like to be added to the mailing list to be kept informed about future Speak Up groups, please let us know by calling the office on 01452 234003 or email: [advocacy@inclusion-glos.org](mailto:advocacy@inclusion-glos.org)

By Faye Longley



# Telephone Help Support

## The Samaritans Can Help

By Nick Howorth



When a person calls the Samaritans on 116123 the phone will be answered by a volunteer in total confidence. They will talk through the callers concerns and then put the caller through to a member of staff if that is what the caller would like.

The person can also email [jo@samaritians.org](mailto:jo@samaritians.org)

The email will be read and responded to by a member of staff.

The person can also send a letter to:

Victoria House, Back Albert Place, Cheltenham, GL52 2HN.

Issues that the person can speak to Samaritans about include:

- Mental Health
- Relationships and family problems
- Loss, including family or a friend
- Financial worries
- Job related stress
- Loneliness and isolation
- Painful and or disabling physical illness
- Dependency; alcohol / drugs
- Domestic abuse
- Self harm
- Suicide prevention

They won't make decisions for the person; the person is an expert on their own lives.

Samaritans run face to face free online peer support.

They also offer a free Will writing service.

# Ethan's Places To Go



Ethan zooming out of the photo!

My recommendation for this issue and one of the places I like to visit on a regular basis is Wheels For All at Blackbridge Jubilee Athletics Track in Gloucester.

I like riding the bikes and often attend on Tuesdays and Thursdays as they tend to be the quieter days. I attend these events with my support worker James, and it is easy to get around and fun for everyone.

The location has its own car park, but they don't sell food or drink, so you might need to take something with you if you go along.

The session is £5 per hour inclusive of the helmet and track fee, and parents, carers or guardians can come for free.

More information about how to book, locations, and the support available can be found here: <https://wheelsforall.org.uk/locations/wheelsforall-org-uk-locations-gloucestershire>

Gloucestershire Wheels For All uses three sites in Gloucestershire:

**Accessible Cycling Venue,  
Blackbridge Jubilee Athletics Track,**  
Podsmead, Gloucester, GL2 5A (Monday  
10:30am – 12:30pm, Tuesdays &  
Thursdays 10:30am – 13:00);

**The Forest of Dean Cycle Centre,**  
Cannop Valley, New  
Road, Coleford, GL16 7EH (Wednesday  
10:30am – 12:30pm);

**Belmont School,** Warden Hill Road, Cheltenham, GL51 3AT.  
(Sunday 14:00 – 16:00).



# Useful Contacts



**PALs - 0800 0151 548**

Patient Advice and Liaison Service



**Victim Support - 0808 281 0112**



**POhWER - 0300 456 2370**

Advocacy Services Gloucestershire



**CAB – 0808 189 6280**

Citizens Advice Bureau



**CASA - 01452 317460**

Community Autism Support & Advice



**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.



# INCLUSION GLOUCESTERSHIRE

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## **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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