

IN THE LOOP

We're back with what's happening at Assert

Welcome to the Assert newsletter! We are pleased to publish our August edition of the newsletter. This newsletter contains information about how our staff are providing support through different services, our upcoming activities and events and member stories. We hope you enjoy reading it, as much as we did writing it!

In memory of Dinah Murray (1946-2021)



Assert were very sorry to hear about the recent loss of a colleague and friend, Dinah Murray.

Fergus, Dinah's son wrote the following:

You may already have heard that Dinah died of pancreatic cancer on Wednesday, the 7th of July. She was well cared for and surrounded by love, and had messages of appreciation from so many of the people whose lives she touched. She experienced surprisingly little pain, and a sense of great satisfaction with a life well lived.

Dinah's Guardian obituary was on the BBC Radio 4's obituary programme Last Word. It can still be listened to online here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000y7tf>

There is also a short tribute from Janine Booth in 'Solidarity': <https://workersliberty.org/story/2021-07-20/dinah-murray-1946-2021>

Wenn Lawson's piece about Dinah for the journal Autism should also be available soon: <https://journals.sagepub.com/home/aut>

For those who are not familiar with it, Dinah's own web site is Productive Irritant: <http://productiveirritant.org/>

Assert (especially Anya and Sarah) had worked with Dinah at various times and she was very much respected and valued by all at Assert. In 2019 we were thrilled to have Dinah present at our AGM. She gave a talk about behaviourism and the NHS "STOMP" initiative: (Stopping over medication of people with a learning disability, autism or both) Assert also worked closely with Dinah and others on the ASK app.

Dinah campaigned for autism rights for much of her life. She had more recently moved from London to Scotland. She will be dearly missed by many. Assert send their warmest wishes to Fergus and her family and friends.

ORGANISATIONAL UPDATE

By Sarah Archer

Hi all,

I hope people are enjoying the summer months.

Assert have been successful in securing a second round of funding from the BHCC to buy vouchers to support people who are struggling to buy essential food, clothes or household items. We have 18, £50 vouchers to distribute. These will be for Love to Shop E Gift cards only. This can be exchanged to use in a number of retailers including Asda, Sainsbury's Morrisons, TK Maxx, and Argos. These vouchers are intended to support people to buy food, clothes or essential household items only.

If you would like to apply for a voucher please email Sarah on **sarah@assertbh.org.uk** by midday on Monday 6th September. In your email please provide the following information:

- What the voucher would help with. This can be for food or to purchase other essential personal or household items (such as clothes, kitchen items, bedding, towels etc)
- What shop you intend to use (from the list available on the [Love to Shop E Card](#) page)
- If you are in a family with children that live with you and if so, how many children.

Vouchers will be distributed in mid- September.

We have heard that a recent large funding bid that I've written has made it through to the third assessment stage. This is a funding application to the Henry Smith Charity requesting funding to maintain our Benefits Advice Service. Current funding for this project ends at the end of December 2021. We know how needed and in demand this service is and we hope to secure funding to ensure that we can keep providing this support in the coming years.

We have also applied to run a monthly activity from October to March 2022, in partnership with Roots to Resilience. I applied for this funding from BHCC in July and we hope to hear very soon if this has been successful. These activities will be full days and will be either outdoor and garden based or indoor (with the winter months coming) and craft based. We will keep everyone up-dated on the outcome of the funding application.

Our next **Roots to Resilience Garden day** will be on **Friday 20th August**. There were several people on the waiting list who did not get a place at the previous session and who have got the opportunity for a place this time. This will be a full day at Stanmer Park, with a mindfulness session, an art session, a tour of the flower garden and the opportunity to pick and take home a beautiful bunch of flowers. This activity is fully booked already.

A piece of work that is high on my priority list is to write the application to the Charity Commission to request to change the terminology used in our governing document. I will be doing this in the coming month and hope that we will be able to have an up-dated constitution towards the end of 2021.

WELLBEING CLUB

By Jenna Dadak

Hello all,

The blended Coffee Club has been running very smoothly. The Club which falls on the 2nd Wednesday of the month is remote and the Club on the 4th Wednesday of the month is in-person as an outdoor café. This has allowed opportunities for more people who be able to attend the groups and social is a way which suits them.

In July, the Active Club activity was Tai Chi and the group had a fantastic time. We did the activity in Queens Park, with our bare feet on the grass, surrounded by squirrels and birds; it felt so grounding to be in nature, moving together. Then this month's Activity has been Petanque. It was comically windy on the sea front but we had a lovely time.

As always, the waitlist for Support Sessions continues to be open. If you have a goal or an issue you would like to overcome or work towards, please email me on jenna@assertbh.org.uk



ASSERT PEER DISCUSSION GROUP (PDG)

By Jenna Dadak

In August, the Peer Discussion Group is also moving to a blended offer – this means that there will be an in-person and Zoom session each month. The PDG that takes place in the 1st Tuesday will remain on Zoom, and then PDG on the 3rd Tuesday of the month will now be in-person. These sessions will be in the Conference Room of Community Base and will have a capacity of 8 people, plus myself & a volunteer. These spaces will be saved for people who haven't been able to access online PDGs, however I encourage regulars to still sign-up in case there are space available.

ASSERT PARENT, PARTNERS AND CARERS GROUP

By Jenna Dadak

The Parent, Partner & Carers support group continues to be held every 4th Tuesday of the month at the Park View Pub, near Preston Park. We have a few new parents attend last week which was really nice. Those who came expressed how nice it is to speak to other people with similar life experiences.

BENEFITS SERVICE

By Alex Little

Hi Everyone,

The Department for Work and Pensions are currently consulting on how the benefits system can better meet the needs of people with health conditions and disabilities. You can take part in their online survey here: <https://getinvolved.dwp.gov.uk/05-policy-group/health-and-disability-green-paper/>

The Government have also just launched their new National Disability Strategy, and you can find excerpts, or read that in full here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-national-disability-strategy-launches>

The Assert Benefits Service continues to be very busy at the moment. Please do make sure you get in touch as soon as you can when you need any support to make sure you can get booked in, as the service is now booked up until the middle of September. The best way to get in touch with me to book in is by email: **Benefits@assertbh.org.uk**

Also, a further reminder for those of you on Universal Credit, the Covid uplift payment is due to end in September. Your payments from October will therefore be lower.

Keep staying safe and well!

LIFESKILLS-COURSES

By Julia Martinez

MANAGING STRESS AND BUILDING RESILIENCE THROUGH MINDFULNESS PROGRAM

Beginning on Tuesday 24th August at 15.30

We will meet together over ZOOM for 45 minutes to cover topics that help us understand stress and building resilience and then to begin practicing Mindfulness together.

Each week you will be sent some short notes on the topic and an MP3 to practice between sessions, as well as the Zoom link.

During the session Emerald will give a short explanation of the topic, with notes, we will have a short discussion followed by a facilitated Mindfulness practice.

This programme is designed to introduce to Mindfulness practices and provide some understanding and tools to cope with stress. We will focus on the following topics:

24th August 15.30

Stress and Mindfulness, getting started with a practice.

31st August 15.30

Finding opportunities for Mindfulness in Everyday Life and for helping Sleep.

7th Sept 15.30

Mindfulness for Managing Thoughts

14th Sept 15.30

Mindfulness and relationships with ourselves and others

21st Sept 15.30

Spotting future warning signs of stress and consolidating what we have practiced

We hope that you will join us!

Please contact Julia- lifeskills@assertbh.org.uk

ASSERT STANMER PARK WALK

By Debbie Caulfield

Hello,

I went on and enjoyed a lovely great walk at Stanmer Park on the Downs (hills) last Saturday, 31st July, with some of the people from Assert. Lovely to meet in person again.

Whilst on the walk there was a storm as well as it was sunny and warm, but luckily the trees (our nature friends) protected us from getting wet.

Walking is one of my favourite things I enjoy doing and it is so beneficial to our wellbeing, as it puts us in tune with our natural environment of landscape beauty. As well as walking, photography is another one of my passions and I have the pleasure in showing some of my photos of the walk.



ASSERT OPERATIONS

By Debbie Taylor

Hi everyone,

Finally some sun again, it is still summer after all.

I hope you are finding the added freedoms from previous restrictions positive, while recognising that people may be anxious with so many more people out and about in shops and on the streets generally.

I know some of you have been enjoying some of the in-person activities at Assert, like walks, Active club and Coffee Club. It has been nice to see some of you in person again after what feels such a long period of time.

At Assert we will continue the mixed offers of alternate in-person and remote delivery for some of our services like Coffee Club and Peer Discussion Group, to respond to the overwhelming feedback that this is what people would like.

Just to remind people that Community Base still have strict safety measures in place for people coming to the building. I must emphasise that it isn't possible for people to drop by without a pre-arranged appointment. There is a new intercom system being installed and people will be required to wait outside the building until collected by the relevant member of staff for any arranged in-person appointments.

Another change some of you may have noticed on our website, is if you need to speak to a member of staff at Assert over a particular issue, you now directly contact the relevant member of staff on their mobile number. There is no longer a daily duty system. This does mean if someone is on holiday they may not get back to you straightaway and most of our mobiles don't have an answerphone facility. We are working more from the office, so it is now more likely that someone will be able to answer the office phone too, but e-mail is still always the best way of making contact with us.

I hope you have a good month.

Debbie Taylor – debbiet@assertbh.org.uk

ASSERT ACTIVITIES AND VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

By Cat Hogan-Jones

I am happy to say that our befriending service is fully back up and running with new matches being made already. Some of our volunteers are now happy to do face to face meetings so do get in touch if you would like some support – once a week for around 6 months, either over zoom or face to face.

DIGITAL AND MARKETING ASSISTANT

By Prachi Pal

Hi everyone,

I hope you are enjoying the summer in the UK. Back in India, we have the monsoon season going on, after a very hot summer. It's nice to get some rain. The month of August marks a year of my engagement with Assert, and it has been such a rewarding, learning and fruitful journey. I joined Assert as an intern during my Master's at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex. Though my degree has finished and I am now back in India, I continue to support Assert with the newsletter, blog, and other things digital!

Please feel free to write to me on supporters@assertbh.org.uk with your contributions or any suggestions for the blog or the newsletter. Your contributions can be in the form of write ups, poetry, photography, puzzles, or anything else. We are happy to keep your contribution anonymous as well.



JENNA'S WELLBEING COLUMN: A DISCUSSION ON FRIENDSHIP BY PDG PARTICIPANTS

During a recent Peer Discussion Group, we talked about friendship, how people make friends and how they keep them. This Wellbeing pack will be an overview of this discussion.

What does it mean to be friends? What are the differences between friends and acquaintances?

The group discussed this and talked about acquaintances being people who have a common interest or goal. This then brings them together to do these activities. However, friends are people who choose to be with one another despite fixed arrangements such as work or common activities. If this is the case, then how does someone form a friendship after meeting someone?

Here are some of the main points from last weeks discussion:

- Talking to people about diagnosis might help to reduce judgement when approaching people
- Being open and upfront helps people who are open to our differences to make decent friends
- Showing vulnerabilities to decent people encourages connection
- Easier to make friends who are similar to us, as there is more understanding and compassion
- Friends are people who don't have to explain yourself to
- Deciding where to place energy is really important
- The balance is even within healthy friendships
- Balance can created through working on boundaries
- Social connections impact physical & mental health
- It takes time to let people in & to trust them

- Good friends are people who willing to wait or invest time in understanding you
- Friendship takes bravery to approach, and usually a common connection to start from
- Negative impacts are felt more profoundly than for neurotypical people, and that's ok
- Similarly, when there is a connection autistics invest more emotional weight which increases sensitivity
- You need different friends for different areas of your life
- For some, since diagnosis, self-realisation & self-actualisation help with unmasking and understanding what has happened in previous relationships
- Embracing diagnosis can lead to help meet people who are healthier for us
- Having friends means having someone else to tell your thoughts to. Especially when feeling overwhelmed
- Good to meet people in groups, activities & through common interests
- Few good things is more valuable than a crowd

TOGETHER, WE CAN

Assert are still here for you. We want to hear from you about how we can help you and what you would find beneficial. Please get in touch if you have any ideas for new ways to connect with and support you. If you cannot access remote support, we may be able to offer you in person support. You would need to be able to give a reasonable explanation regarding why remote support is inaccessible to you. Assert have spent time ensuring that we can do limited in person support safely. This offer is subject to change due to requirements from the Government changing or staff availability altering.



DONATE TO ASSERT: YOUR SUPPORT IS VITAL TO US

The pandemic has had a huge impact on the wellbeing of everyone. It's been a really difficult time and has required continued adaptation, changes to routines and different ways of working. It has also impacted on funding opportunities for Assert and the services we provide. We have lost funding for our Activities Coordinator position and it is impossible to fundraise for this in current circumstances. Supporting our clients is now more important than ever and we need your support to help us to continue to offer our services and support.

Donations to Assert are vital in keeping the charity operational and free at point of service. We are incredibly grateful for any donations received. You can donate to us through PayPal or the 'donate' button on our Facebook page. You could also make donations in cash, via cheque or bank transfer, host your own fundraiser or use the link below:

<https://www.paypal.com/uk/fundraiser/charity/2333838>

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND REGULAR UPDATES, FOLLOW US ON OUR SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS:



/ASSERTBANDH



@ASSERT_BH



**HELLO
AUGUST**

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES CALENDAR- MAY

PEER DISCUSSION GROUP

1ST AND 3RD TUESDAY
VIA ZOOM/ IN PERSON

COFFEE CLUB

2ND AND 4TH WEDNESDAY
FROM 11AM-1 PM, VIA ZOOM/IN PERSON

PARENT, PARTNERS AND CARERS GROUP

4TH TUESDAY EVERY MONTH

ACTIVE CLUB

FIRST FRIDAY OF THE MONTH

ROOTS TO RESILIENCE GARDEN DAY

FRIDAY, 20TH AUGUST

MINDFULNESS PROGRAMME

STARTS 24TH AUGUST

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT US VIA

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