

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the new format for sharing information between members of the Stoke-on-Trent Volunteer Managers Network. We agreed that a more informal newsletter style circulation would be preferable to formal meeting notes and minutes, and so here we are!

This newsletter will enable us to reach those who haven't attended meetings and to share our latest news, opportunities and events. Let us know what you would like to see here - meeting dates, meeting notes, articles and even interviews. All contributions welcome - drop Jo, Mike or Zi a line if you have something you would like to feature.

The Stoke Volunteer Network / Forum was set up in 2016 as part of our bid to become City of Culture. The group has continued meeting regularly, initially chaired by Mike Thornley (Dougie Mac) but now led by a steering group comprising: Mike Thornley: michaelthornley@dmhospice.org.uk Jo Coulson: jo@vintagevolunteers.org.uk Zi Makhiwa: zi@saltbox.org.uk

The group welcomes anyone who works with volunteers in Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-Under-Lyme.

MEETING NOTES

Zi from Saltbox spoke about the way their volunteers have found themselves supporting each other during the pandemic period. Both their service users and their volunteers all tend to be older people and so have been the worst affected. She described how volunteering supports their health and wellbeing particularly when so many have found their isolation suddenly increased. In some cases the effects on mental health have been quite serious. For this group of volunteers, being encouraged to adopt a peer support model has had surprisingly positive results. Zi recommends nurturing volunteers to develop friendships and support networks among themselves. Often friendships will develop organically but if there are ways volunteer managers can facilitate, the outcomes are well worthwhile.

Email: zi@saltbox.org.uk

Mike from Dougie Mac spoke about technology and the numbers of 'technopobes' that have been surprised at how quickly they have adapted to the latest virtual ways of working. Most platforms are relatively user-friendly now and Mike recommends keeping things as simple as possible. The results can be empowering. Lots of us are now delivering volunteer training online and carrying out our meetings on Zoom and Teams (and how much are we saving on travel expenses and overheads?) We should explore using the latest technology to benefit our volunteers as much as possible. For example, volunteers could video themselves teaching new skills and upload for new volunteers to learn from. We can and should facilitate their befriending and support networks, reflecting what Zi discussed, using online private groups. on social media.

Email: michaelthornley@dmhospice.org.uk

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

We are looking for volunteers to help out at Hanley Bus Station, greeting travellers, reminding them about masks and social distancing and generally being a welcoming face. This opportunity would suit a friendly, people person with some time on their hands. Shifts are either am (10-12) or pm (2-4) and you can commit to as many or as few as you like. Why not try a shift and see what you think?

Email for more information: michaelthornley@dmhospice.org.uk OR jo@vintagevolunteers.org.uk

MEETING DATES 2020

Friday 6th September 1pm - 2:30pm (Zoom)

Friday 8th November 1pm - 2:30pm (Zoom)

Please contact jo@vintagevolunteers.org.uk to book a place and be sent your Zoom meeting invitation.

Thank you for supporting the Network and looking forward to another great meeting!