

## August Newsletter

Hello Everyone,

Hope this August newsletter finds you all well and enjoying the fruits (and rain) of this Manchester Summer. I've been picking blackberries on my cycle home from Assist- are they early this year? Either way, good for a crumble!



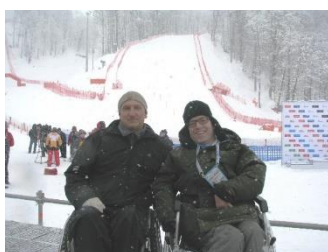
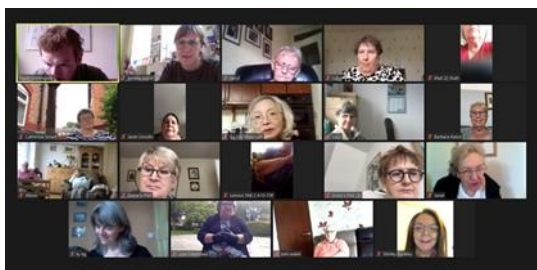
I had been meaning to get this letter out earlier and was actually all set to print when... the local lockdown was announced, which has altered Assist's plans slightly. However, we're feeling confident that we have all the risk assessments, planning and measures in place so that as soon as Manchester is deemed a little safer, we'll be ready to start getting together small groups, starting with Positive Living, using the large, downstairs room. Our Assist during Covid19 Guidelines which cover social distancing, hand sanitizer, using the loo and various other points, will need to be followed at all times, but it will be a small step back to some kind of normal and lovely to see some familiar faces.

In the meantime, volunteers continue to shop, collect prescriptions, post letters, drop of lunches, deliver newsletters, make calls and generally keep everyone feeling connected. Throughout lockdown these befriending partnerships have been a lovely support for everyone involved, and a reminder that once this is all over we've got friends to get together with and no one needs feel alone. Until then, as the local lockdown guidelines restrict us from meeting in gardens or homes, we're looking to organise meet ups in local parks whilst the weather is still warm. Equally, if anyone is feeling anxious about heading out alone whether to the shops or for a walk, perhaps being paired up with a volunteer who can accompany you would be helpful? Give us a call on 0161 434 9216 or email [withingtonassist@gmail.com](mailto:withingtonassist@gmail.com) for more information or to sign up.

**Facemasks/Getting Creative:** As you'll no doubt have noticed, the wearing of facemasks has become a must-do in shops, cafes and on public transport. We're lucky at Assist to have a talented member sewing reusable, cloth masks for us, so if anyone is struggling get in touch and I can arrange to have one dropped off. Following this crafty theme, another creative volunteer is asking if any knitters would be interested in making something for the Ladybarn park art trail ... perhaps hats or cosies for the marker posts? Scarves for the trees? Maybe with the name of the tree species on them? Last year there were knitted bees in the trees and crocheted fruit and veg! Let me know if you think you'd like to contribute something, would like a pattern or wool sending over and we can get you crafting..



**Virtual Tea and Talks:** Following the success of July's talk on birds and butterflies, we have the



lovely and entertaining Mark Todd presenting his work and travels as an accessibility expert for the Paralympics! With tea and cake from the Co-op delivered by volunteer, get 2pm Monday 24<sup>th</sup> August in your

diary and prepare for an afternoon of friendly faces and interesting tales. Let us know if you'd like to attend so we can get your name on the cake delivery list and email you the Zoom details...

**Zoom Exercise Classes:** continue to run on a Friday morning with our excellent and enthusiastic instructor, Ruby (see pic). I'd like to take this opportunity to give ourselves a round of applause for getting to grips so well with all this new technology- who'd have thought it! As classes in the church are not set to open again for at least August, quite possibly September too, please get in touch if you would like to join either the 10.30 or 11.30 session. For those who have been asking about paying for the sessions, a donation towards the instructor costs would be fantastic and I can organise for a volunteer to collect cash donations if a cheque in the post or donation via the website is not possible.



**Tai Chi on Zoom:** Friday 21<sup>st</sup> August 11am- all welcome. As our exercise instructor will be on holiday, we'll be taking the opportunity to have a seated Tai Chi class led by Bee Bee. Come along and join in (from home) to try something new or refresh an old skill, for a soothing half hour of movement and a moment of calm.

**Positive Living Group:** Hoping to meet for the first time on Wednesday August 26<sup>th</sup>, subject to the local lockdown lifting... Debra continues to support attendees via Whatsapp and phone calls.

**Lunch Club:** We have recently been awarded a grant from the We Love Manchester fund to help support our lunch club as a delivery service! It has been fantastic to be able to keep this going throughout lockdown, and we'll now be able to continue whilst the lockdown remains in place.



**Digital Phone In:** we now have three regular telephone volunteers helping members access Skype, Zoom, Whatsapp or simply getting to grips with their phone/tablet/computer etc. Please get in touch if you would like any support.

**Assist Annual General Meeting:** 11am on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> September. Although it may be possible to meet indoors by then if precautions are followed, we feel it will be easier to host (and hear!) a larger number of people if we hold it over Zoom. The meeting will be a chance to share ideas and opinions on how you feel Assist operates, offer suggestions or feedback, and is also the meeting in which we formally adopt our committee members and fulfil our legal obligations as a charity. If you are able and willing, it would be great to have you there. If you do not use Zoom but would like to contribute feedback, get it in writing or let me know and a volunteer could note it down over the phone and read it out.

On a slightly more unfortunate note, there have been a number of phone scams doing the rounds, including ones mentioning amazon, track and trace, and various banks. Remember- there is no need to give your bank details to anyone over the phone and if you are ever unsure, hang up. Equally, local GPs would like to reassure us that their surgeries are safe places to visit. If you are worried about something or have non- Covid related symptoms, do not put off a trip to the doctors as they have all their precautions in place and are keen to help.

Phew! Take care everyone, stay positive and stay safe, and keep in touch,

**Amelia and all at Assist**

## **Meet the Team: Margaret Redhouse**

*I joined ASSIST as a volunteer when the Care Group started 51 years ago, became the Co-ordinator in 1980 and am now a member of the Management Committee. The office was very different in 1980- no computers, just paper records, one phone, and a mechanical typewriter. However, two volunteers (and sometimes a dog) were there each day and dealt efficiently with personal callers and telephone calls. I particularly remember the enthusiastic university students, and the pupils of Ewing School who volunteered as part of their Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. There were lots of requests for help with gardening and so, as we were very lucky to find a volunteer, John. We bought a petrol mower in the 1980s and John has been cutting people's grass ever since (I think he might be on the third mower now!). We started a day centre on a Thursday with a small army of young male volunteer chefs and helped to form an Association of Neighbourhood Care Groups which is still going strong. Amongst many unusual requests we received was one where a disabled man's regular visitor arrived on a frosty morning and was asked if she would bury the cat which had died in the night! You have to be able to turn your hand to anything! ASSIST continues to thrive and one thing which I really appreciate nowadays is that there is much less distinction between "requests" and "volunteers" - everyone now is a "member" of ASSIST.*

