

This year, as for all of the 12 years we have been in existence, our volunteers have gone out weekly to meet with people who are finding life difficult at the moment. They spend hours listening and helping people to find their own solutions to their present problems and then they support them to take whatever steps are necessary to change things. We are a small organisation. This year we have had 15 volunteers working but between them they have travelled most 6000 miles (not including all those done on foot, by bike and by those using their free bus passes) from Tiverton to Kentisbeare, Holcombe Rogus to Halberton and the odd far-flung place in between, visiting people ranging in age from their 20's to their 80's. These people have been struggling with anxiety, depression and grief and quite often things have been complicated by debt or housing problems. Some of the people we visit have lost the courage or ability to get beyond their own front door.

Does what we do make a difference?

These are some of the quotes we have received this year:



VSS may be small but it is incredibly powerful

"She has helped me to look at myself in a different light, not to be ashamed of who I am ,and to be proud of what I have achieved in the last couple of years"

Client

"He has been an enormous help and support through a very difficult time. I really could not have coped without him."

Client

"Clients have usually been able to maintain a more outward looking attitude after the visitor has withdrawn and they are willing to try new things."

Referrer

"It [VSS] is a scarce resource which myself and the team value as an adjunct to what we offer. It has a significant role in providing low key support, companionship and encouragement and is useful in helping people reclaim their lives and build social structures that prevent relapse"

Referrer

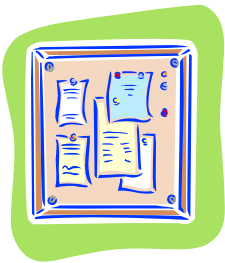
Review of the way we work.



A clear look at the way we worked showed that we needed more capacity as the amount we do has steadily increased and the part-time co-ordinator had reached her limit.



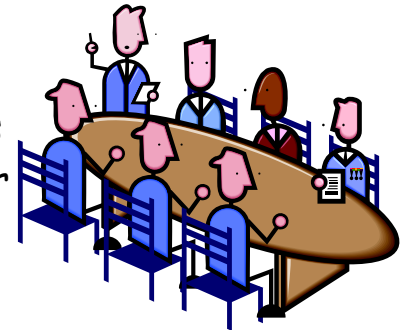
To get over that we identified areas of work that volunteers could take on and we now have volunteers doing bookkeeping, fundraising, helping with talks to local organisations, enveloping newsletters, managing the library, producing a library database, developing and up keeping a website, designing publicity materials and systematically distributing posters and leaflets to doctors' surgeries, job centres etc.



This wide range of jobs offers roles that have been filled by, among others, ex-clients who want to be involved in what we do.



In addition several of our volunteers (who usually undertake volunteer visiting) have joined our management committee as trustees, bringing with them years of experience in business and the mental health field, as well as in the voluntary sector.



Please do have a look at our website:

www.voluntarysupportscheme.org.uk

From there you can download newsletters, our leaflet, reports on research done on our work and our Umbrella Project booklet, as well as keeping up to date with any news and reading more about our work.

Forums



This year we held two forums: *Saying Goodbye—bereavement experiences from childhood to older adulthood* in June and in March, *Mind matters—stress and how to combat it*. In total they brought together 77 people from the voluntary sector, statutory organisations and members of the public with an interest in the subjects. The speakers were all experts in their fields who were able to bring their subjects alive for a very diverse audience. We had a much valued chance to relax together over lunch to share ideas and experience. Subsequent feedback showed how people took the information they had gleaned from the days back into their everyday lives with clients, friends and family.



Finances

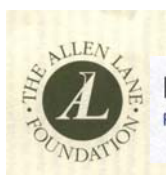


We raised £21229 in total this year: £19578 as grants from Mid Devon Primary Care Trust, Tudor Trust, Lloyds TSB Foundation for England and Wales, Yapp Charitable Trust, Allen Lane Foundation, Awards for All, Devon Educational Trust, Tiverton Town Council and Mid Devon District Council. The rest came from generous individual donations, fund raising by our committee and from benefit performances arranged by Tiverton Amateur Operatic Society.

Thank you for all your support!

Our costs of £17829 fell roughly into three groups. Our administration costs came to £1501. We spent £1977 on putting on the forums. The rest of our expenses are due to the cost of employing and supporting the Co-ordinator and the volunteers' travel and training costs.

A detailed break down of our finances is available if you are interested.



Mid Devon
Primary Care Trust



the
Tudor trust

Devon Educational Trust



Mid
Devon
DISTRICT COUNCIL
Where People Matter

Tiverton Town Council



THE YAPP CHARITABLE TRUST

