

Brighter Futures Newsletter

Winter Issue



SEASON'S GREETINGS

AND A HAPPY AND HEALTHY NEW YEAR

This winter issue provides the latest news about the Brighter Futures project, including feedback from one of our participants of their experience of Brighter Futures mentoring, what life as a Brighter Futures Peer Mentor Volunteer is *really* like and feedback from our third group of volunteers on their induction training. There is also news of our forthcoming booklet on mental health, well-being and ageing and our new group work initiative in care homes and sheltered accommodation.

The third intake of Peer Mentor Volunteers complete their induction training



Brighter Futures welcomes the third intake of volunteers (pictured above). They completed their training last month and are already busy with their matched participants or are part of the group work team.



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Gladys Hanniford said of her training, *"I thoroughly enjoyed it and learnt a lot about communication and the importance of boundaries. I was impressed with the quality of the course and feel excited about starting my volunteering with Brighter Futures."*

We are currently training the fourth group of volunteers on Wednesday evenings at Williamwood High School and they will be ready to embark on their mentoring in the new year.

Laura Griggs, Brighter Futures co-ordinator, is justly proud of her team and says, *"the commitment, dedication and enthusiasm of all our volunteers has been amazing. They have made a really positive difference to the lives of their participants."*

Local Authority supports Brighter Futures

Ever wanted to feature in a glossy magazine?

East Renfrewshire's impressive *er* magazine which is sent to every householder in the authority is featuring Brighter Futures as part of their December issue.

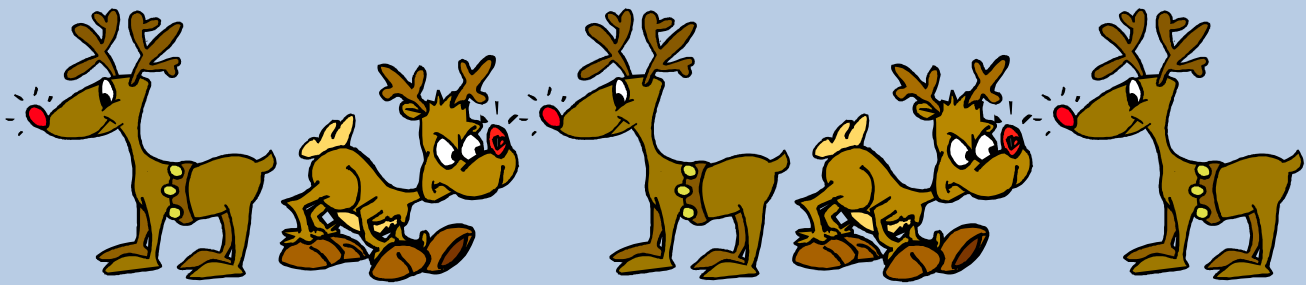
For those of you in East Renfrewshire who receive a copy, catch up on an example of the way peer mentoring can benefit an isolated older adult and think about joining our friendly and motivated team to do your bit for your community.

**VOLUNTEERS STILL URGENTLY
REQUIRED!**

RAMH Brighter Futures scoops anti-stigma equality grant for mental health booklet

Thanks to the 'see me' equality awards, work is currently underway to produce a mental health booklet for older adults.

"We are delighted and excited that 'see me' provided us with this equality award," says Laura Griggs, Brighter Futures coordinator. *"There is still a lot of stigma and misunderstanding around mental health within this age group and an invalid assumption that feeling low or anxious is just part of growing old. It isn't, and no-one should spend their last few years isolated and suffering in silence. Thanks to 'see me' we now have the opportunity to get this important message out to a particularly vulnerable part of our community."*



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Brighter Futures gives a group hug

December sees the launch of the first Brighter Futures group work in East Renfrewshire.

The aim is to provide older adults with a safe space to explore the concepts of mental health and ageing. The group will offer a relaxed environment where members can gain a clear understanding of the emotional and practical issues and barriers common in later life; improved understanding of how this sometimes makes individuals vulnerable; an improved understanding of how to reduce the likelihood of mental health problems; an increased awareness and confidence in taking steps to enable good mental health and well-being and a significant reduction in the stigma associated with mental health issues.

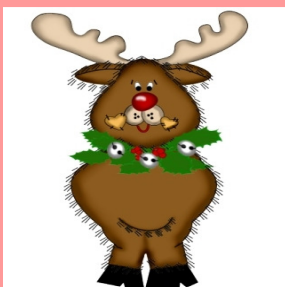
Stakeholder feedback

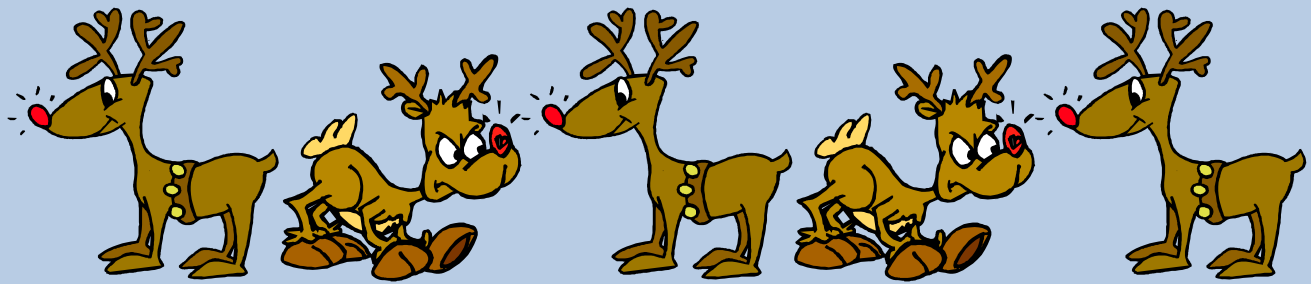
Mrs M is a 64 year old lady who we are supporting in Renfrewshire. She says of her mentoring experience:

"I found it a tremendous help and it has given me a whole new outlook. Brighter Futures has given me the confidence to try art workshops and I have started an art course at Strathclyde University. Before this I haven't been confident enough to go out on my own for 4 years. It has helped me to get my dignity back."

Group Objectives

- ✓ To meet with older adults in venues supported by other partners within the East Renfrewshire locality
- ✓ To explore issues of isolation
- ✓ To promote social interaction
- ✓ To increase confidence and self esteem through participation in the group
- ✓ Evaluate and monitor the group
- ✓ To promote and develop an awareness of the work of SeeMe and other mental health services.





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Extreme Cold Weather Advice

EXERCISE



Gentle exercise can help to keep you warm in cold weather.

Keeping active generates heat and helps to keep you warm. It's good for general fitness and wellbeing too.

So when you're indoors, try not to sit still for more than an hour. Get up and walk around, make yourself a warm drink, and spread any chores throughout the day.

Chair-based exercises and simply moving your arms and legs and wiggling your toes are helpful if walking is difficult.

FOOD AND DRINK

Hot meals and drinks help keep you warm, so eat at least one hot meal and have hot drinks during the day.

Include a good range of foods in your diet and aim for five portions of fruit and vegetables each day so that you're getting plenty of nutrients and vitamins.

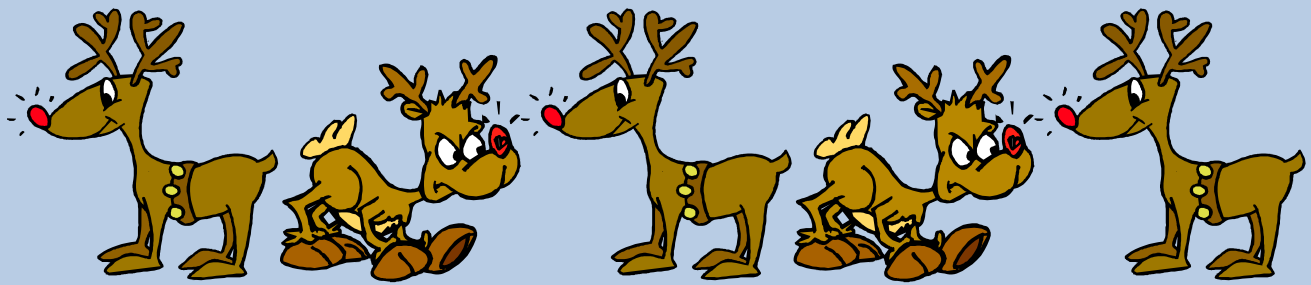
Remember that frozen vegetables are as good as fresh.

Having a hot drink before bed and keeping a hot drink in a flask by the bed are good ideas too.

CLOTHING

Make sure you have enough clothes: thermal underwear, socks, hat, gloves, and a warm coat. Wear lots of thin layers to trap the heat in. Wear warm night clothes in bed and consider a hot water bottle or electric blanket.

Have a seasonal flu jab: If you're over 65 be sure to have a seasonal flu jab. Seasonal flu viruses are always changing, so you need to have a jab every year, using the latest vaccine. Flu is not only unpleasant but it can develop into pneumonia, which can be serious. A flu jab is also recommended if you're under 65 with a condition such as diabetes, a chronic heart, lung, kidney or liver problem, have Parkinson's or have had a stroke.



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Winter Falls Prevention

Scotland's winter of 2010 has already delivered large quantities of snow and ice.

For all of us, but especially older adults, all this ice and snow means an increased chance of slipping and falling. Here are eight things you can do to make winter a little less perilous:

- ❖ **Check the traction on your footwear.** Take a look at your shoes and boots. Are they worn smooth? Is it time for a new pair? Shoes with better traction will grip the ground better. Change into your dress shoes once you're inside.
- ❖ **Check railings.** If you have stairs with railings leading up to your door, check to make sure they're sturdy. Could they catch you if you slipped?
- ❖ **Keep your salt and shovel in the house.** The purpose of having salt and a shovel is so you don't have to walk in the snow or on an icy path. If you have to walk through the snow to get to your garage where the salt and shovel are, you've defeated that purpose.
- ❖ **Carry a mobile phone.** If you slip and fall, it can be very difficult to get back up, and you might have to call someone for help. A mobile phone, even if used rarely, can bring peace of mind when you are going out alone.

- ❖ **Ask for help.** If you have to walk across an icy pavement or car park, try to find a steady arm to lean on. Most people are happy to help an older person navigate a slippery walkway. You just have to ask.
- ❖ **Have a plan.** Think about where you are going and ask yourself, "If I fell here, what would I do?"
- ❖ **Slow down.** When you're late, you end up hurrying and sometimes pushing the limits of what your balance can handle. Allow for extra time so you don't have to rush.
- ❖ **Strengthen your legs.** If you slip, strong leg muscles can help catch you before you hit the ground. If you do fall, they can help you get back up easier. The best thing to do to strengthen your legs is to use them more. Exercise regularly. At home you can walk up and down the stairs or practice getting up out of a chair ten times in a row.



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A Year in the Life of

A Brighter Futures Peer Mentor Volunteer by Roseleen Lafferty

This cold snowy weather takes me back to last December when the challenge was to make it to each Brighter Futures training session. There weren't a whole lot of things that would get me out of a warm house on those bitterly cold and icy evenings but I was excited to start the training (even though I was a bit apprehensive).

The reality was, however, that I found it to be a very positive experience for me and I enjoyed the company of the others I trained with. As the sessions progressed and our trainers Laura and Claire encouraged us to work things out ourselves, rather than just talk at us, I realised I did have something valuable to offer! I also began to realise it was more than helpful preparation for the peer mentoring as it was also benefiting me as an individual. The training we received opened up my mind to the ageing process and increased my understanding and empathy of the uncertainties and possible fears people face as they get older, especially if they are isolated and with no-one to share things with. It prepared me for the reality of working with older adults and helped me look beyond their presentation of themselves. The result of this has been that I've been able to develop a trusting relationship with my two participants and hopefully they feel they've been able to talk to me about their concerns and worries as well as concentrate on achieving their practical goals.

I've also genuinely appreciated the post training supervision and support I've received from my co-ordinator Laura. This has been most helpful to me both personally and operationally; ensuring I've carried out my volunteering in a professional manner whilst feeling supported to do so. I've found the peer mentoring experience with Brighter Futures enjoyable and extremely rewarding. The last year's volunteering has been great for my own self esteem and confidence and I would recommend Brighter Futures mentor volunteering to anyone!



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Adventures in mentoring with Brighter Futures

By John Wilde

As someone always on the look out for new experiences I signed up as a volunteer and came across Brighter Futures. Given my varied, and haphazard career (you can ask me about it if you like!) and my greedy attitude to information and experience, along with a boyish enthusiasm which makes me feel always 19 in spirit if not in body (or looks unfortunately!), I found to my surprise that mentoring seemed to fit me like a comfortable hat.

But first ... The Training.

As a 'victim' of many a boring training session in the corporate part of my career, I was hoping for something with a bit of meat to it, a bit of challenge and insight. Well, our small group certainly got that from Laura and Claire. The sessions were fun, unpatronising, serious and intelligent. They provided a rich and practical introduction to our future role as mentors.

Laura (my co-ordinator) introduced me to two very different participants, Mr P and Mrs M, with very different views, aspirations and interests. Mr P had a fairly clear idea of what he wanted to achieve within a particular activity and Mrs M had a more general wish to involve herself in past or as yet undiscovered interests.

Mr P was able to achieve an aim of having an email account fairly swiftly with help and is now embarking on a Local Authority course in basic computer skills while Mrs M started with one off art and craft classes and went on to enrol at a University Continuing Studies course in her chosen subject.

So how did this come about?

The key things for me were not so much the nature of the activity, but how we approached it and the sometimes unexpected spin off benefits.

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Mrs M and I spent a lot of time discussing options and trying different things, my enthusiasm on occasion bubbling over just a tad! When we agreed on a longer term activity I felt Mrs M had the determination to see it through and she has - admirably. It was something she wanted to do, for herself. She has benefited from increased strength of will, granting time and attention to herself and revealing her talents to herself.

Mr P and I kept to a routine; meeting up, a bit of a chat then down to practicalities. This appeared to suit him and the benefits have been an increased social ease and confidence in conversation as well as practical skills.

So what do you need for this kind of work? For me, I was glad of my varied, not always pleasant range of experiences, the hard knocks as well as the good things in life.

Feeling human in the sense of feeling part of humanity in all its glories, achievements, disasters and desolations and taking each person for who they are.

Good supervision and support from your project managers (amply provided by Laura at Brighter Futures).

An ability to get on with all sorts of people. The ability to make serious points with a sensitive touch, and... to be yourself.

As for me I am now working more or less full time as an Activity Organiser, doing one to one and group work with elderly people and I love it! I am still involved in Brighter Futures; doing a music workshop soon and helping out with a forthcoming booklet Laura is producing. And hopefully I'll get a new participant in the New Year!

If you think you could benefit from the support of a Peer Mentor Volunteer or be part of our mentoring team then please contact the Brighter Futures Volunteer Coordinator on 0141 881 8811 or email: laurag@ramh.org