

Welcome to a round up of our latest news

Could you be our next new Volunteer Mentor?

Two of our newest mentors share their experiences:

Becky writes:

"I was very excited to get started with meeting a potential new client after I had finished my training. Even though I was nervous with the introductory meeting, I was very pleased with how it went. We got on really well and I looked forward to meeting with the client again. Early on in my experience as a mentor, I was quick to understand the challenges that came with working with people who live unpredictable and chaotic lifestyles. The mentee did not attend the meetings that we agreed on together. Although he seemed

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eager to engage with SWCC and wanted to be supported, we did not meet again due to unforeseen circumstances. Although I had anticipated such challenges, experiencing them first-hand was slightly disheartening for both myself and the individual I was working with. I felt as though I wanted to do more to help and support him through his current circumstances, but I understand that you cannot force someone to engage, they have to make their own decisions. Whilst I haven't had a second face-to-face meeting with this client, we did have several conversations on the phone. It was during this time, I could see the amazing impact that mentoring can have on the clients we work with at SWCC. Being the listening ear that people need, to offload their feelings and make sense of the thoughts they are having, is personally the most rewarding part of being a mentor. Some of these individuals have never experienced consistent and positive support or someone that shows that they care about their wellbeing. We may not have lived the same experiences or have similar circumstances to those that we mentor, but there is something special about being paired with someone and working together to achieve personal successes, no matter how small."

Michael reflects:

"I met my two Mentees for the first time accompanied by the respective Community Chaplains. This was a new experience for me, wondering what my reactions might be given the nature of the offences. Surprisingly, I needn't have worried - both meetings passed very quickly and pleasantly. One Mentee I see every other week, the other every Tuesday. A degree of mutual trust seems to be developing, though I am still on my guard to some extent. So far, however, we get on very well. Prior to each meeting I try to prepare by making a mental note of topical issues to talk about, and trying to find activities that might motivate and occupy my Mentees because I think time hangs heavily with them. Kicking their heels



all day cannot be good. We are looking for voluntary, and paid work to solve this problem, but, for obvious reasons, this is not easy.

It is difficult to measure how effective I am being, but hopefully my Mentees at least have a definite fixture each week to help break up the week (on alternate weeks I text or telephone the every-other-week Mentee). Would that I could change their lives dramatically for the good - but I have to face reality.

Could you be a mentor with us? Our next Induction Training begins September 9th over four Thursday mornings, online.

Get in touch to find out more!

CONTACT US AT:

South West Community Chaplaincy

CoLab Exeter, Wat Tyler House, King William Street, Exeter EX4 6PD

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Shaun's story...making a difference

When Shaun was discharged from prison he was overwhelmed and his mental health was very fragile. He was allocated a mentor, Rachel, who supported him to get help for his physical and mental health, and to sort out his debts and plan a workable budget. But the biggest obstacle in Shaun's mind was that his relationship with his two daughters was broken. He had not been able to have any contact with them in four years. It was a huge source of pain that he brought to his regular meetings with Rachel, and he found it incredibly difficult to think about anything else, or to find the motivation to deal with day-to-day issues. Sometimes, he expressed suicidal thoughts.

During those early days, Rachel helped him hold on to hope and focus on building his life, ready to work towards re-establishing contact with the girls. He managed to get a flat and some work, and in time his life was fairly stable. His next focus was a desperate attempt to save up funds for a solicitor to fight his case to see his daughters again. It was a slow business. One day Shaun excitedly called his Mentor. "Rachel, you will never guess what! I've spoken to my eldest daughter! And she wants to come and live with me!"

As the story of his eldest unfolded, full of tragic twists, the positive side of it all was that she was now in a position to reconnect with her Dad with the full support of the authorities. They started to be in daily contact and to rebuild on those lost years. Although due to lockdown, he couldn't visit her, she was in no doubt of his love for her.

This changed everything. Shaun would get the official support he needed to challenge the court's previous decision and be able to see his beloved daughter, even have her live with him. Over the course of a week, the whole outlook of reconnecting with his girls had become full of hope and possibilities.

"Rachel was the reason I pulled through when I was at my lowest. I wouldn't speak to a social worker about contact with my children or attend any meetings, because I felt it was hopeless and it made me feel devastated when I spoke with them, but she supported me to work through things to the point where I could attend a meeting, engage with the social services process, and speak up. I was only able to do this because I knew she was behind me".

'Shaun'

News in brief

We are delighted to share with you our new promotional film, highlighting the work of SWCC. Thank you Callum at thetannerycreative.com

Check it out on YouTube through the link :

<https://youtu.be/etTmRiFQXyE>

Mentor training course

Dates:

Thursdays 9th, 16th, 23rd and 30th September 2021

Times:

09:30 am — 12:00 noon

If you are a person of faith please hold the work of SWCC in your prayers, especially:

For the resources we need to meet the increasing demands for help.

For our Volunteer Mentors as they faithfully 'walk alongside' clients week by week.

For clients who are struggling with their mental health.

For solutions to the severe shortage of housing and lack of work opportunities for people who are trying to get back on their feet.

Staff News

Introducing Liz, our new Community Chaplain

Most of my working life has been spent with vulnerable people. Caring for them and being part of enhancing their life skills and quality of life. In later years I trained and worked in local parishes as Lay Minister with the Church of England. I also volunteered for two years with the local Food Bank, meeting many families struggling to make ends meet and listening to their stories of survival. This re-enforced my desire to work with those who are disadvantaged and tending to live life on the edge of society. I then became aware of the charity, South West Community Chaplaincy and the support it gives to those in prison, and those who have left prison as they seek to build a new life in the community. This deepened my belief that my true vocation lay in walking alongside those struggling to reintegrate back into society and helping them overcome the many obstacles on that journey to acceptance by the community at large. For two and a half years I volunteered with SWCC, both in HMP Dartmoor, and also mentoring out and about in the community and I have found that non-judgemental collaboration works in changing lives. I feel it a real privilege to have now taken up the role of Community Chaplain.



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