Justlife

August
2024

Social Connections

Volunteer Experience!

Thank you!

I want to express my deep gratitude for the incredible team of volunteers who generously dedicate their time and energy to building meaningful connections with people transitioning away from homelessness in their local communities. Without them, SCP activities would not be possible. I am thrilled that Justlife can offer volunteering opportunities to the wider community, many of whom have been impacted by homelessness in one way or another. These opportunities help break down barriers and create space for people with lived experience to get involved as volunteers. I am passionate about making the volunteer experience as meaningful as possible. The positive feedback from our volunteer team energises me, and I am excited about the changes we can make together to improve the volunteer experience further. Thank you, so much for being awesome!

Si Campbell

Some Impressive Numbers!

Our first befriending match was in June 2020. Initially, contact was made via telephone, and gradually moved to in-person meetings from around March 2021 onwards.

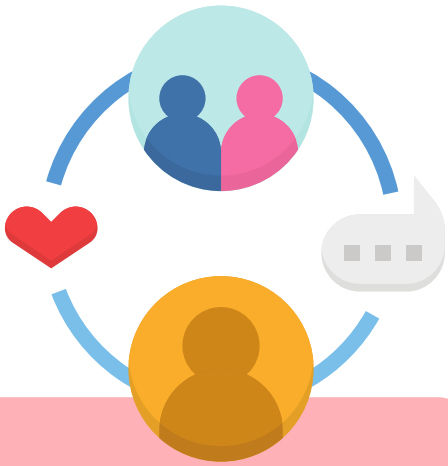
74
befriending matches

61
people completed the new volunteer training programme

3
volunteers have transitioned to paid roles at Justlife

6
volunteers have regularly co-facilitated the peer support group since it start in February 2021

2
people who accessed the SCP have trained and become befrienders and group facilitators



1296
recorded meet-ups between befrienders and their match. Each meet-up is approx. 1 hr

15 of you filled in our survey and 8 dropped into volunteer impact day. Thank you! This report presents a summary of what you shared about your experiences, the support provided, challenges faced, and suggestions for improvement.

1. High Levels of Satisfaction in the Volunteer Experience!

Volunteers generally reported a very positive experience, citing strong support from SCP staff as a reason for this. You told us you felt well-prepared for your roles due to comprehensive training, which many found life-enhancing beyond their volunteer duties. Everyone who answered told us they'd strongly recommend SCP volunteering to a friend!

2. Support is deeply valued

The team: You highly praised the support provided by the Social Connections Project (SCP) staff, especially the availability of help when needed from Si and his team. Peer support between volunteers, especially from those who'd been there a while, was also really valued.

Training and preparation: The training program received positive feedback for creating a safe and supportive environment, clear communication, equipping volunteers with necessary skills, and boosting their confidence. You also felt that matches were made with care and attention to the needs of the befriendee.

2. Support is deeply valued (continued)

Reflective Practice: On the impact day, Nayna came in to talk to you about running group reflective practice session for you. Based on your feedback in the survey and on the day, it seems this would be a useful means of support to have access to.

3. Lived Experience voice, design and consideration is vital

Those of you with lived experience of homelessness emphasised the importance of including lived experience perspectives in training and activities, to help new volunteers better understand the realities of homelessness.

Several of you suggested more client stories and real-life examples be included in training to enhance understanding and empathy.

There was also the suggestion that meeting an existing client and volunteer pair during training in a Q&A type session could be really useful for preparation for the role.

"The SCP recognises the humanity and individuality of every person, and that is something that really resonates with me,"

4. Possible Barriers to Volunteering

Childcare and Financial Issues: Some volunteers faced challenges related to childcare and the cost of volunteering. These issues were mostly resolved through support from staff.

Confidence: Initial lack of confidence was a barrier for some, but support from staff helped overcome this!

Pathway from client to volunteer: There was some useful feedback about ways we could improve tailored support for people who become volunteers on the project after being clients of it, though overall people who had been on this journey found it very well supported.

5. Community and Social Activities

While the sense of community was strong, you expressed a desire for more social activities and opportunities to connect outside of your volunteer roles!

Suggested activities included: beach walks, picnics, pub quizzes, board game nights, field games, coffee shop hangouts, experience based activities such as horse therapy, ideas swapping forums, and craft and hangouts in the Justlife Hub.

Conclusion and Our Next Steps!

The feedback from you highlights the strengths of the SCP volunteering program, particularly in terms of support and training.

However, you also showed us some areas for development, especially in addressing barriers to volunteering and centring the lived experience of homelessness.

Based on what you've told us, here is what we will go away and work on to ensure the good things continue, and how we will act on your suggestions for improvement!

01

Enhance Training with Lived Experience
We will spend some time revisiting our training to find ways to include more client voice, stories and experiences in training sessions.

02

Reflective practice group
We will set this up to help strengthen the peer to peer support you all value and give you other ways to learn and develop while volunteering.

03

Address Financial and Childcare Barriers
We will investigate what structured support could be put in place to help volunteers with childcare and upfront costs.

04

Expand Social Activities
We will organise a social events calendar to cater to different interests and schedules , and give you the chance to connect more.

05

Consider Accreditation
We will explore the feasibility of accrediting the volunteer training program to provide formal recognition of skills learned.

Justlife

About Justlife

Justlife is a national homelessness charity advocating for people who are living in temporary accommodation. Locally, in Brighton & Hove and Greater Manchester, we support people to improve their mental and physical health, and find a safe, stable home of their own. Nationally, we push for policy change to improve the lives of people experiencing homelessness across the country.

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We are a Living Wage Employer

Registered charity: 1140822