

Often I start a newsletter with apologising for how overdue it is. . . . those previous overdue newsletters pale into insignificance compared to how totally late this one, indeed it's so late that we've missed out Autumn completely and just gone straight to our Christmas one!!! So prepare for a bumper edition:-)

I know it sounds like I'm making excuses, but the past 6 months have been the perfect storm of a shortage of volunteers, high demand for our service, an increase in the amount of immigration advice, the roll out of Universal Credit, and switching to advicePro to record our work! You have no idea how many times I have sat down to write this newsletter and it's just not happened!

Thank you for your patience and please do accept our apologies for the delay in keeping you informed of our news.

The Good, The Bad, The Ugly!

We have seen it all in recent months!

The Good

What a blessing it has been to welcome Kerwei, Paul, Lauren and Alyson to our volunteer team. They have fitted in exceptionally quickly and become an integral part of The Well family. They have such a variety of gifts which add so much to our work. We are always needing volunteers, especially for the advice work. Maybe like Alyson, you would love to volunteer, but are not sure the advice work is for you - then please get in touch. We're looking forward to Alyson supporting some of our women who just need extra support.



In recent weeks we've been very well fed with stews from Algeria, Biryani (and all the trimmings!), chicken curry, cake, chocolates . . . more chocolates. We've been given cards and flowers and countless expressions of appreciation as people have been so relieved to have been helped.

What a thrill it's been in recent weeks to see how the Chai & Chat group has welcomed in new people from various cultures and backgrounds and how they have gelled together

so naturally. I smiled recently when the common language between a Pakistani and Arab woman was Italian! It's been a delight to watch them help each other knit facecloths and even when the experienced knitters weren't there, the group muddled through, with their combined knowledge of different skills! Last week I watched them decorate our Chrismon Tree, which now has pride of place in the reception area.



We have had an increasing number of requests for our bespoke Cross-Cultural Awareness Training from across various sectors across the city - and we feel honoured that people respect what we do so much, that they want to learn from us.

I've had the privilege of teaching **basic** IT skills to a group of Romanian Roma women at The Space. (A partner organisation in Govanhill) What fun that has been. The laughs of them as they have tried to draw a stick man, using the mouse. Would you like to try it?

<http://www.drawastickman.com/episode1>

A couple of weeks ago we were told that we had been nominated for the Scottish Asian Business Awards for Charity Work of the year! How good is that?!

The Bad

Right now we are supporting several very vulnerable women (and a few men) who have exceptionally difficult personal situations. Two women have recently had to escape from abusive relationships - both suffering every type of domestic abuse you could imagine, (physical, emotional, sexual). Both had been isolated in very controlling situations, both now homeless as a consequence, and both so grateful that through The Well they have a safe place not just to get practical help, but also, just as important, a non-judgemental listening ear. I am especially grateful that Penny has been able and willing to accompany one of them - Shanaz* to copious appointments and sit for hours waiting for her to be helped.



Layla* has greatly benefitted from finally being able to speak to someone in her own language - what a blessing that has been to her, and sometimes it feels like the tap has been turned on, and there's a lot to come out!

Please pray with us for these folks - some of the wounds are very deep. We long to see these women will finding total healing from the One who knows their deepest secrets, fears and hurts.

Some of "the bad" that can be confusing to deal with is often a direct result of cultural issues, sometimes on the part of the statutory Scottish body. In at least two cases this has caused real pain and suffering for the family.

There are other types of bad - like having to tell Maryam*, that as the EEA national she is the one who has to work, regardless of whether her non-EEA national husband is working or not. This is so counter-cultural for her, and hard to think that if she gets work, but they can't get child-care, then he will have to give up his work to look after the children! It's complicated - but what a privilege to be able to pray with her.



So many of our service users live in fear of what Brexit will mean for them and their families: Will they be able to keep their jobs? Will they be allowed to stay? Much of my time is spent trying to correct the "street wisdom" that tells them they must do this or that to be safe - Most of the "this or that" is just a waste of money! Others live in fear of what Universal Credit will mean for them, and that's just from what they have heard on the news or read, or

picked up from friends.

Both of these issues will greatly increase our work load going forward, as folks will have to apply for help with their pre-settled and settled status after March, and others will depend on us to help them as they apply for and manage their Universal Credit Journals - digitally. (Not easy when you don't read and write English and you've never been near a computer in your life!)

The Ugly



Very rarely do we have problems with any of our service users. Indeed I only remember a couple of serious incidents in the last 20 years. But when it happens it's really upsetting for everyone and even more so if there's a wee run of "ugly". So recently when Jan discovered that her mobile phone had been stolen in The Well, it was very disappointing to know that people would steal from us. Sadly we've seen an increase in theft from The Well - another volunteer also had a phone stolen, and money has also been stolen. Sad that people would do it and sad that sometimes they feel they have no choice but to steal to survive.

Another recent very "ugly" incident was a service user who has on-going

anger issues. When I told him that his appointment letter would come the next day, unfortunately his anger exploded, he stormed out of The Well and promptly smashed our window! So upsetting for everyone - the children who were waiting in the reception area, the service users who were alarmed by his actions, the staff who witnessed - but ultimately for him. Yes, it's cost us £550 to fix, but I cannot imagine what it must be like to live with such anger all the time. Amazingly, given that he is homeless, the police were able to trace him and he has been arrested and charged with the incident. Our prayer for him is that he will get the help he needs even as a result of this explosion or rage.

And finally . . .

No-one ever wants to finish with The Bad or Ugly and I'm no different.

In March 2019 we will begin a year of celebration to mark 25 years of The Well . . . Wow!!! (Not bad for a project that was given a year as a pilot!) We've got lots of ideas of things that we plan to do to mark this momentous event, and we'll be giving you suggestions of things that you can do to be a part of it - even if you don't live local to Glasgow. Watch this space!



In 2019 we will need to recruit a development worker - please pray that the person of God's choice would be obvious - He knows the person and the skills that we need. We are fairly niche and it's not everyone who would be a good fit for the role, so please pray for the right person to fill this role.



We're sorry that Gail has reached retirement age and has chosen to retire at the end of the year. Gail has brought a unique blend of artistic talent and a passion for working with internationals to The Well. I have had the privilege of hearing her work with our service users. What a gift! Such compassion! And to hear Gail pray is truly a blessing. We will miss her as our Admin worker, but pray God's blessing on her as she enters the next phase of her ministry - whatever that might be. It does also mean that there will be a vacancy in The Well for her successor, but I'm delighted that in the mean time Lauren has agreed to fill the role - with support from Maida for all things finance.

I'm constantly humbled by the trust that people place in us and thrilled by the relationships are made possible in and through The Well. I'm so grateful for the support of a fully committed Board, and the dedication of our volunteer family. I'm encouraged that people want to pray for us and support us. For all of these things we give thanks. But most of all we give that thanks that at this time of year we especially remember the greatest gift of all - Immanuel, God with us. He is with us in the good, He's been with us in the bad and also in the Ugly and we rejoice to know that: "The light shines through the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it." John 1:5

May you and yours have a meaningful Christmas and a Peaceful New Year.

Rhoda

*Names changed to protect identity.