

# Client involvement:

## Creating opportunities through the pandemic

We have worked hard to keep client involvement at the centre of our work during the pandemic, moving our Client Advisory Board online, creating a podcast and running Peer Facilitation Courses to keep our clients engaged with the organisation. Client volunteer, Chris, reflects on the past year and the impact that client involvement has had on him.

I first encountered St Mungo's through their Sanctuary service and the Bristol Men's Crisis House as I was experiencing anxiety and depression on a level that was unmanageable. It was invaluable to me. I was in a really bad way and I started to engage with St Mungo's gardening project, Putting Down Roots, which accelerated my recovery and really boosted my confidence.

Later on in the year, I attended the peer facilitation group course that the client involvement team run, and went on to facilitate Bristol & Bath Outside In which was starting up for the first time. The group is about empowering people who are or have been clients of St Mungo's to have a say in the direction of St Mungo's services and how things are run. I was so grateful for the support from the Client Involvement team in running the group as my anxiety was kicking in big time. They gave me the space to build my confidence up.

I have also been invited to join job interview panels recently as part of client involvement as they have been a particular barrier for me in the past. This has been an incredibly helpful experience for me to prepare for work.

Outside In recently took part in the Cotswold Way Challenge which raised over £1,000 for St Mungo's. Clients I have met have also had opportunities to get involved with the Client Advisory Board, weekly online client forums to help stay connected and walking groups to keep active.

Client involvement has been a massive help for me in building my confidence back up. It's also about progression. To that end, with the support of staff and peers at St Mungo's, I have just managed to secure employment within mental health recovery. Client involvement has been at the heart of putting all the things in place that have allowed me to take that step. I am so grateful.



Chris, client volunteer (centre), Tom, client volunteer (left) and Rubyjo, Gardener Trainer (right)

**Outside In** is St Mungo's client representative group and the voice of our clients. The name represents the aim that those who are often on the outside of power and decision making are brought in and have a real say.



The **Client Advisory Board (CAB)** is a team of clients or former clients who work in partnership with the Board of Trustees. This makes sure clients are involved in high level decision making at St Mungo's. The CAB meet regularly with Trustees and members of the Executive team to consider board papers and use their experience to influence the Board's work.

### Our impact in 2020-21

**52**  
weekly online  
client forums.



**10**  
walking groups  
(when restrictions allowed).



**180**  
clients subscribed  
to our monthly  
newsletter.

