

# the echo

## FEATURING

### **FUN CLUB**

A Stourbridge based club for people with learning disabilities or needs

### **INTEGRATED PLUS**

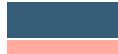
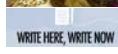
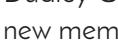
Voluntary sector helping people at risk of hospital admission

### **VERONICA'S STORY**

Supporting people to combat isolation and loneliness



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## AVAILABLE IN LARGE PRINT ON REQUEST

## New Starters

Dudley CVS is pleased to welcome the following new members of staff:

**Sarah Hill, Support Officer, Healthwatch Dudley**  
 e: [sarah@healthwatchdudley.co.uk](mailto:sarah@healthwatchdudley.co.uk) t: 03000 111 001  
 Read more about Sarah on our Dudley CVS blog:  
[www.tinyurl.com/dcvssstarters](http://www.tinyurl.com/dcvssstarters)

**Keeley Waldron, Locality Link Development Officer, Integrated Plus.** Read more about Keeley on our Dudley CVS blog: [www.tinyurl.com/dcvssstarters](http://www.tinyurl.com/dcvssstarters)  
 e: [keeley@dudleycvs.org.uk](mailto:keeley@dudleycvs.org.uk) t: 07866020509

**Abdullah Mohamed, Interim Link Support Worker, Integrated Plus** e: [abdullah@dudleycvs.org.uk](mailto:abdullah@dudleycvs.org.uk)  
 t: 07508 307498

**Donna Roberts, Children and Communities Officer, Children, Young People, Families and Communities team** e: [donna@dudleycvs.org.uk](mailto:donna@dudleycvs.org.uk) t: 07866020509

**Luke Hamblett, Youth and Communities Development Officer, Children, Young People, Families and Communities team.** Read more about Luke on our Dudley CVS blog:  
[www.tinyurl.com/dcvssstarters](http://www.tinyurl.com/dcvssstarters)  
 e: [luke@dudleycvs.org.uk](mailto:luke@dudleycvs.org.uk) t: 07866020509

## Navigating difficult times and getting the help you need!

Anyone who is involved with a not-for-profit is invited to attend a connecting and information event on Thursday 12th October, 9:30am - 11:30 am at DY1 Venue in the main hall.

We hope this event will help you build the resources that you need and connect you with new people, to enhance the great work that you already do and look at new possibilities.

See what free support is available and learn how to connect with businesses.

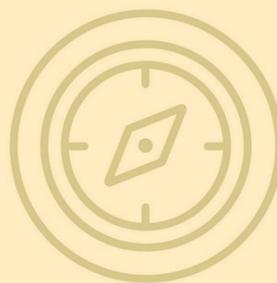
If you know a small, medium or large group who may need some help, why not invite them along?

Eileen Fielding, Helena Norman and Martin Jones from the Dudley CVS team will be there along with Andy Mullaney. Martin is the Dudley CVS Funding Officer, who has years of expertise in sourcing funding and sits on the Heart of England Grants Panel. He's going to talk about what funders are looking for and is happy to take questions.

Andy Mullaney worked for a large bank for many years and was Dudley's Business Connector 2015/2016 supported by Business in the Community. He's planning to run a short workshop giving tools and tips on how to engage effectively with businesses. In these challenging times, this could be a great opportunity for you to draw in skills and support from businesses, who wish to connect with local communities.

We'll have the usual networking over a cuppa too of course.

**i Book your free place at** [www.tinyurl.com/navigatingdifficulttimes](http://www.tinyurl.com/navigatingdifficulttimes) **or contact Eileen Fielding for more information about the event** [eileen@dudleycvs.org.uk](mailto:eileen@dudleycvs.org.uk)



## NAVIGATING DIFFICULT TIMES

and getting the help you need

## Introducing the Children, Young People, Families and Communities team

It's an exciting time to be working with children and young people within Dudley borough! Voluntary, community, faith organisations and groups as well as statutory partners are creating great opportunities for children and young people to get involved and have their views heard. Dudley CVS is thrilled to be able to introduce the newly formed children and youth in communities' team to support with focusing on voice of the child and establishing and supporting open access youth work across the borough.

Public Health and Dudley MBC Family Solutions have seen how this area of work is growing and have invested in the addition of two new posts to join Nicki Burrows and the Dudley CVS team. Nicki is now the Children's Strategic lead for Children's Services at CVS and is joined by Donna Roberts the Children and Communities Officer and Luke Hamblett the Youth and Communities Development Officer.

We are really working hard to find and understand all of the great work that voluntary organisations do. We would love to hear what you are doing, you can help to do this by getting in touch and filling out one of the census forms to capture the youth work that you provide: [www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/HRFTDH5](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/HRFTDH5)

**i** You can also engage in and use our brand new website; [iZone.org.uk](http://iZone.org.uk) which provides young people, parents and professionals with a safe place to find information about local provisions.

### Meet Becky, Dudley Young Health Champion

The Dudley Young Health Champions project is an exciting collaboration between Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group, Dudley Public Health and Dudley CVS. The project is located within Healthwatch Dudley and follows on from their research with Dudley Youth Health Researchers. Mental health was raised as an important issue for young people in Dudley together with the lack of information that was available to parents in how to support their children.

Faye Hall, Young Health Champions Project Coordinator, is developing a network of Young Health Champions aged 11-25 across the Dudley borough to enable local young people to be listened to and their views taken into account by people who plan and deliver services for children and young people across voluntary and statutory sectors. The project will also help partners to be more responsive to the health needs of young people in Dudley borough.

Becky Lawley has been volunteering 2-3 days per week for the Dudley Young Health Champions Project.

Becky is 18 and has experienced a number of challenges and difficulties in her life that have led to a number of mental health issues. Today, Becky is working on a number of projects where she is using her life experience in a positive way to encourage other young people to talk about how they feel and to support one another.

As a very talented artist, Becky has developed an arts based pack of postcards that contain representations of her feelings with explanations of what they mean. The pack is aimed at adolescents and professionals working with young people. The pack is going to be distributed



Artwork by Becky Lawley

amongst services such as CAMHS, GP surgeries, school nurses and youth based organisations.

Becky is also coordinating a Christmas collection for Leslie's Care Packages for the homeless, which will include a card she has designed with positive messages. Alongside this work, she has also started a project blog, administers the twitter page and is supporting with promotional material.

Becky regularly attends meetings with decision makers across Dudley and is very highly regarded, she has also been nominated for Dudley Volunteer Awards Young Volunteer of the Year!

**Read Becky's blog:** [www.dudleyyhc.wordpress.com/](http://www.dudleyyhc.wordpress.com/)

**i** To find out more about the project contact Faye Hall at [fayehall@dudleycvs.org.uk](mailto:fayehall@dudleycvs.org.uk)

## Voluntary sector helping to meet the needs of people at risk of hospital admission

Over the past three years, Integrated Plus has been working with people at risk of hospital admission and frequent visitors of GP surgeries as part of Dudley's new care model.

The aim of the service is to help people become more active and involved in their communities and access support services appropriate to their needs. Integrated Plus staff meet with people, often in their own homes, to identify with the person their goals, aspirations and struggles.

From this, people are:

- Helped to resolve issues faced
- Encouraged to connect with services, predominately in the voluntary and community sector
- Engaged in volunteering opportunities
- Connected with others to offer peer support or engage in peer-led networks
- Helped to take part in social activities, clubs or community-led events and projects.

During 1st September 2014 - 18th July 2017, a total of **2,619** referrals have been received from GPs and staff from multi-disciplinary team meetings held at the **46** General Practices.

**5,766** onward connections have been made to **363** organisations. **2,508** connections have been made to **84** specific services and activities (people being connected to more than one organisation, service or activity).

**74%** of connections have been to voluntary and community sector organisations which demonstrates the valuable contribution that the sector is making in the new care model. Some voluntary sector organisations have been in high demand, particularly in areas tackling isolation, mental health, bereavement, dementia and welfare/debts. Organisations such as AgeUK Dudley, Age Concern, Royal Voluntary Service, Creative Support, Dudley Mind, Rethink, Alzheimer's Society, Citizens Advice, CRUSE Bereavement have received the biggest number of referrals from Integrated Plus.

Although **74%** of connections have been to voluntary sector organisations, when looking at connections to specific services and activities a high percentage (71%) have also been to local authority

services such as Adult Social Care and Public Health services. These services included telecare, adult community learning, the carer's network, Dudley Home Improvement Service, libraries, winter warmth and various self-management programmes.

When looking at connections to organisations by theme, **43%** were to health and wellbeing activities such as befriending, social activities, learning activities and leisure. Connections to specific services by theme shows that **47%** were to care and support provision such aids and adaptations, support to adequately heat the home enabling people to remain independent in their own homes.

From 1-2-1 discussions with people supported, the areas where the greatest outcomes are being reported include: improved quality of life, increased friendships, reduced isolation, improved wellbeing, reduced stress and anxiety, increased confidence and self-esteem, being better able to get out and about and improved healthy lifestyles.

### Reducing demand on primary and secondary care

By Integrated Plus enabling people to engage and connect with a range of community-led services and activities there has been a reduction in demand for primary and secondary care. Data extracted from EMIS (GP IT system) and DSCRO (hospital IT system) shows that:

#### Reducing demand on primary care

GP visits reduced by	GP home visits reduced by	GP telephone consultations has increased by
<b>24%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>15%</b>

Overall, cost avoidance **£17,965**

#### Reducing demand on secondary care

Emergency admissions over a 6 month period reduced by	A&E attendances over a 6 month period reduced by
<b>13%</b>	<b>13%</b>

cost avoidance **£91,772.24** cost avoidance **£9,568.80**

**i** If you would like to read the full Integrated Plus social and economic evaluation report visit: [www.tinyurl.com/integratedplusreport](http://www.tinyurl.com/integratedplusreport)

## Mike helped with alcohol dependency

Mike was referred to Integrated Plus by Dudley Talking Therapy Service. During the initial assessment, he was very anxious and consumed two large glasses of vodka. Mike discussed his alcohol dependency and expressed concerns relating to the high levels of anxiety he was experiencing. Mike disclosed he was drinking around two bottles of vodka a day and only left the house to buy alcohol. Mike was very distressed and upset by what was happening and also concerned about running out of money from savings. Mike had always worked until two years ago when his high pressure job got too much to bear. Mike resigned and planned to take some time out before seeking further employment but the alcohol consumption became chaotic. Mike was concerned that when the savings ran out there would be no money to purchase alcohol. He was also fearful of seizures and potentially life threatening withdrawal symptoms.

The Integrated Plus Link Officer helped Mike to access the right services and helped him to apply for Employment Support Allowance as he was not in a fit state to be seeking work at that time. As Mike was very anxious and not comfortable talking on the phone the Link Officer liaised with the practice to get the relevant supporting documentation. Mike was awarded the benefit soon after. An appointment was made for Mike to be triaged at an alcohol support service. However, he faced some difficulties in being able to get to and from the service and the service wasn't able to provide the particular support he felt he needed. Other support services were identified outside the borough but they could not support Mike due to him paying council tax to Dudley MBC. In the mean time we were able to provide Mike with a food parcel and toiletries as he had very little in the house.

Mike tried to attend his initial appointment at the alcohol service based in Dudley borough but had problems with the bus ride which ended up being a very distressing situation. Following this and against advice Mike decided to self-detox over a weekend and was prepared to go into hospital if required. Mike saw the weekend through and got through the worst of the withdrawal symptoms. The Link Officer helped Mike to liaise with the practice to get medication prescribed for anxiety. Mike was becoming more stable on medication and abstaining from alcohol use. Other issues were disclosed to the Link Officer in

regards to the reasons for the alcohol consumption so a referral was made to Summit House with a view to receive specific support. A referral was also made to Supporting People to obtain a support worker to help Mike build confidence. Mike responded fantastically well to the support. Over time he started attending regular support groups at Summit House. Healthwatch Dudley also met with him at home to capture his experiences of services.

*"This has really got me back into mixing with people again and took me out of my old lifestyle. Before this I couldn't leave the house due to anxiety. At that time I could have quite easily ended it all. Between Integrated Plus and Summit House it has pretty much saved my life. The Three Principles group was like a penny dropping - the past can't hurt me because it's done and dusted. It's been a real game changer for me and Summit House has offered everything I needed under one roof".*

Mike

*"Mike was assessed at Summit House and presented as suffering with severe anxiety. Mike informed the guidance worker that due to social isolation he would find it difficult to engage in group work. What a difference four months makes. I really feel that the services at Summit House have met Mike's holistic needs. Mike is now a popular person at Summit House and is very focused on their recovery and future".*

Pamela Holloway - Summit House

Mike has started facilitating a Three Principles group at a residential rehabilitation service in Birmingham and is scheduled to deliver another in the city shortly. He has engaged in training courses and is looking forward to starting a substance misuse course in the coming weeks.

Mike has come so far in such a short amount of time and in his own words 'just can't believe it'. He is hoping to secure employment in a similar field in the near future as he has found an area that he is truly passionate about and committed to. Everyone would like to wish Mike the very best for the future and feel confident that he will meet his goals and aspirations in good time.

## Step Closer to Dudley Multispecialty Community Provider (MCP)

Following the launch of the procurement process for Dudley's Multispecialty Community Provider (MCP) in June, Dudley CCG has now announced the bidder that has made it through to the next stage.

Following an initial evaluation, the CCG in partnership with Dudley Council, will enter into a dialogue process with a consortium involving four local NHS Trusts and local GPs. The four trusts are - Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust, Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust and Black Country Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.

The new Multispecialty Community Provider (MCP) will bring together services in an integrated manner and will:

- hold a contract of up to 15 years' duration;
- manage a single, whole-population budget;
- transform the access to and delivery of community health and care services with Primary Care at the centre, and
- meet a defined set of outcome and performance measures.

The consortium has been notified of their successful completion of the first part of the process and the dialogue phase commenced in early September.

### Engaging the voluntary and community sector in the dialogue phase

During the dialogue phase, Dudley CVS is aiming to bring together the voluntary and community sector with the organisations that may form the consortium if awarded the contract. The aim of the session will be to explore opportunities and ideas for potential collaboration over the 15 years contract duration. A potential date of 10th October has been put forward. Exact date, venue and time is yet to be confirmed.

**If you are interested in being part of the session, please contact Kate Green on 01384 573381. Email: [buildingblocks@dudleycvs.org.uk](mailto:buildingblocks@dudleycvs.org.uk)**

Paul Maubach, Chief Executive Officer, Dudley CCG said, "We are delighted to have a viable bidder to start the dialogue process with. This process will test out their ideas and see how well they match our vision for an organisation that will be able to deliver better integrated services designed to improve the lives of Dudley people". It is expected that the contract, with the total annual potential value of £363m, will be in place by Spring 2018 with service delivery commencing during the financial year 2018/19.

## POWER OF SOCIAL NETWORKS AND PEER SUPPORT

### Women's Social Club

Integrated Plus has been working in collaboration with Wychbury Medical Practice, Dudley MBC and other NHS organisations as part of the Enabling Practices to Improve and Change Programme (EPIC). A higher proportion of frequent visitors to Wychbury Medical Practice were found to be women. The practice has been working collaboratively with local partners to explore how they can work together differently with patients from the practice and to gain their views about services, ensure there needs are being met and how they would like to be involved in managing their health and wellbeing better. Lorraine Hipkiss, Link Support Worker, Integrated Plus, tells us more:

"Following on from the success of the Men's Club at Christ Church Lye, women were invited to come together to explore socially what they would like to do and how we could support it. The club is still in its early days, having only met three times as yet, but already has a core group of three to four women who want to be involved.

The focus of the club is to enable women to lead on ideas themselves. For example the women might have just wanted a group where they could sit, have a coffee and chat or they might have wanted the group to be more activity based.

During the first get together, there were no plans in place, we spoke to the ladies and asked them what they were expecting or wanting the club to be. The consensus was that they wanted it to include activities like quizzes, crafts, etc. During the chat it was mentioned that one of the ladies was a proficient knitter and another of the ladies had always wanted to learn how to knit so she could make her partner a Dr Who scarf. This was exactly the kind of interactions they wanted, a trade off of skills, of sorts. That became the focus of activities for the following months: teaching and learning how to knit. It was also mentioned that one of the women wanted to do cross stitching at home so again that was another opportunity to trade skills.

For the latest session we decided we would go to

Integrated Plus has been working locally with partner organisations and people referred to Integrated Plus to work in ways that enables and supports people to build social connections, make new friends and share their skills. Here are some examples of activities going on.

Saltwells Nature Reserve and make the most of the good weather. The women who attended this session really enjoyed getting out in the fresh air and doing something they may not otherwise find the time to do. There was one woman who could not join in the walk but still enjoyed sitting on a bench with others watching the world go by and fussing over all the dogs that passed by with their walkers. The women decided that weather permitting we would try to do more outside activities in the future.

The women have set dates in their calendars up until December to continue socialising and exploring things they would like to do."

## Barry's story

### Monday Men's Club

Barry is an ex-service man, having served in both the Army and Navy for over 25 years. Barry has several long term health conditions, including Diabetes and Arthritis and he is also visually impaired. He was referred to Integrated Plus by his GP due to feeling isolated and depressed. Barry said he had no friends and felt 'worthless.'

A particular frustration felt by Barry was his lack of independence and mobility due to his inability to drive anymore. Barry said he felt he was 'getting under his wife's feet being at home all the time.'

When Barry met Nick Tromans, the Locality Link Officer for Stourbridge, Wollescote and Lye, Barry admitted to Nick he was 'lonely and bored.' This was not easy for a proud ex-soldier, who had travelled the world and experienced hostile situations, to admit to. Nick suggested to Barry that he may want to consider attending The Monday Men's Club at Christ Church in Lye to enable to him to meet other people who are experiencing loneliness and isolation.

The Men's Club has been a major success story with a regular and consistent number of about twenty men

visiting every Monday morning between 10 am and 1pm. So far, around 70 men in total have attended the group. There are refreshments, a pool table, darts board, cards, games and newspapers. Lots of activities take place including, breakfast mornings, get cooking, pool and darts competitions and bread making sessions. Last year a Christmas Lunch was well attended and enjoyed by the group. A supportive and non-judgemental camaraderie and atmosphere is fostered within The Men's Club and this is respected by the men who attend.

Barry began attending the group supported by his wife and Nick and he has now become a regular attendee. He has made new friends who he looks forward to spending time with. His friendships have developed further and he now meets up with his new friends outside of the club at home and in social situations. Barry said he was not aware of any groups or activities like this in his local area and he said the group and the friendships he has made have 'lifted me off the floor and given me something to look forward to.' Barry's wife is also happy with the positive impact she feels the club has had on him.



**Veronica lives with her husband in Dudley. Having experienced four years of physical and mental health issues starting with a back injury at the beginning of 2012, Veronica became withdrawn and isolated.**

During an Aspergers diagnosis process, Veronica went through emotional swings and was put under the mental health team for Dudley and advised to do a Cognitive Behavioural Therapy course which was helpful. She also got in touch with an Autism Information Exchange counsellor for support and information. The counsellor signposted Veronica to a group of people working collaboratively in Dudley to nurture local people's ideas and projects. This group of people are co-located in a town centre high street premises with a creative feeling coffee shop at the front.

Veronica had tried to volunteer before, but couldn't commit to the strict timetable designed to serve the organisation, due to her personal issues and conditions. At Gather, the coffee shop run by local social entrepreneurs, Veronica was introduced to a Dudley CVS officer working with the team running Gather. They asked Veronica what she liked doing. Veronica said she loved sewing, and showed them pictures of Christmas decorations she had made. They all chatted for some time, in the comfortable environment of the coffee shop.

Then Veronica heard about what the team were trying to do: help people to start and join all sorts of projects and activities which involved people being together making, sharing or learning from each other. They also talked about plans for something called Do Fest a month later. Veronica was given a tour of other spaces



in the building, including an Inspiration Lab and a workshop. She spotted that the wooden seats in the Inspiration Lab could do with cushions and commented on this. The Lab had been co-created by 28 people in a week in January, but there will always be opportunities for others to add to it. Veronica offered to make covers for foam which was already there, and straight away went to her flat to get some fabric to make covers.

Within a matter of days, Veronica had become a firm fixture in the coffee shop and Lab, getting involved in co-working, crafting, sewing, growing for the garden and helping out with Do Fest. After this Veronica and another crafter instigated a Crafternoon, which is open to all and now brings together a growing number of crafters weekly.

Veronica feels that the reach of a web of people has to be varied in order to help people to get help. She needed the confidence to reach out and ask for help, and the connections this created offered a range of different opportunities. The low barriers to participation and invitation to do what she was skilled and interested in made being involved simple and uncomplicated. Veronica said

*"I thought I was helping the team by volunteering, but they have given back security, friendship, support and a safe place, accepting me for who I am, quirks and all! Although I don't see myself getting back to a 9-5 working environment, I have started gently developing my crafts from the confidence that the team has instilled in me."*

## Feelgood Choir has plenty to sing about: Grant funding success!

The Feelgood Choir really does have something to sing about, after being awarded a grant from Awards for All!

The group originally started as Dudley Mind Feelgood Choir, with the idea that group singing could be a wonderful aid to mental health. The choir regularly sang at shows and events, including at two Dudley Volunteer Awards.

Late last year, two choir members contacted Becky to explore the idea of setting the choir up as an independent group that might be able to manage itself and make it more sustainable. Due to cuts to the voluntary sector, Dudley Mind could offer the choir limited support and a free venue for rehearsals, but could no longer cover all the costs involved with running the choir.

Becky talked members through setting up as a voluntary group, explained the role of the committee, developed paperwork and helped members to think about planning. This involved identifying what difference the group wanted to make to people's lives and how it would do that and thinking about what costs were involved so that any funding application we worked on would be as detailed and specific as possible.

Becky and the group emerged with a simple plan and Awards for All was recommended as an appropriate funder to approach. Members worked really hard on the application, putting in research, stories from members and learning from running the choir with help from Dudley Mind. Becky was on hand to review the application and make some suggestions for improving it so that it was



completely clear.

After a few months of waiting and nailbiting, we finally heard the great news!

While working on the bid, Dudley Mind had to close Dove House where the Feelgood Choir rehearsed because of further cuts to its funding. Thankfully, the Feelgood Choir was able to secure another venue to continue rehearsing and now it has room for many more members. So if you'd like to join a fun, welcoming group, you can go along at 6.15pm on Wednesday evenings (except in August). It's £4 per week and no experience is necessary. They don't do auditions either; everyone is welcome.

**i** To learn more about the Feelgood Choir, visit its lovely website: [www.feelgoodchoir.co.uk](http://www.feelgoodchoir.co.uk)  
Read more on our blog: <https://dudleycsvsblog.com/2017/07/10/feelgood-choir-has-plenty-to-sing-about-grant-funding-success/>

## Quarry Bank receive silver gilt award

Dedicated volunteers from the Quarry Bank in Bloom team are delighted to have received a silver gilt award at the 2017 Heart of England in Bloom Awards, held in the Great Hall at Warwick Castle.

The judges were taken on a two-hour tour of Quarry Bank in July - taking in Saltwells Nature Reserve, Stevens Park, Christ Church, Quarry Bank Primary School and Quarry Bank Community Centre.

Volunteer Tom Keys said: *"Those who travel via Quarry Bank cannot fail to see, even today, the wonderful display of flowers up and down the High Street but without the support of the volunteers, shopkeepers and residents this would not have happened."*

The Heart of England in Bloom Campaign is the regional part of the Royal Horticultural Society's Britain in Bloom Campaign and aims to encourage communities to work together to improve and enhance their environment.

At the end of September the dying summer plants will be removed and fresh compost and winter plants put in. Come Spring 2018, plants for display and judging will be planted, watered and the High Street litter picked throughout the summer.

**i** Volunteers are welcome to meet at Quarry Bank Community Centre, every Monday & Thursday morning for watering and weeding from around 9.30.





**Sheila is looking for some extra pairs of hands to help out in a lovely, friendly atmosphere. But don't take our word for it! Here's what some of Fun Club's regulars think about it:**

*"I like to meet everybody here and the helpers"*

*Rachel*

## Stourbridge Fun Club!

Volunteering won't feel like a chore if you decide to help out at Fun Club, a Stourbridge-based group that's as enjoyable as its name suggests.

We recently visited Fun Club to see how they were getting on. Both Eileen and Becky have supported Fun Club in the past and we thought it was time to pay a visit.

Fun Club was set up in 2010 by Sheila Littlewood. When it took off, we helped the Fun Club to formalise as a small voluntary group with a constitution and we helped it to access a little funding to get it going. The club works with adults with mixed abilities, such as learning disabilities, behavioural problems, autism and sensory disabilities to build their confidence and expression through drama, improve their dexterity and motor skills through craft. The focus is on building an environment where members can socialise, make new friends and have fun!

When we arrived, Fun Club was in full swing, with singing, music and craft activities happening in a relaxed atmosphere. Once everyone had arrived and got settled, Sheila, who set up Fun Club in 2010, helped get the conversation going, learning about what members had been doing and achieving since the previous week. Volunteers helped with making refreshments, demonstrating craft skills and joining in with the chat.

After a cuppa, it was time to do some rehearsal! Every year, Fun Club does a Christmas show, which is always popular, and hilarious - Sheila says that nothing ever goes right! Every member gets a part as big or as small as they want - other members prefer not to be in the play and that's ok too. This year, Fun Club will be performing Stable Boy, a funny take on the Nativity told from the point of view of a very put-upon stable boy. The play is full of songs and jokes and we know everyone who sees it will remember it for a very long time!

*"I like the acting and the trips. I've been to the seaside, theatre, pantomime, Cotswolds Wildlife Park"*  
**Billy**

**So if you think you can help out with Fun Club, please contact Dudley CVS and we will link you up!**



# Operation Santa

Campaigning to help children and young people across Dudley borough have a Christmas!



## Christmas is coming ho, ho, ho and Operation Santa 2017 is go, go, go!

This year has certainly flown and it's time for Operation Santa to prepare the grotto for the piles of toys, gifts, toiletries, food, pyjamas etc which our lovely supporters donate each year. Last year we had 12325 donations which were passed out to children and young people, who may have otherwise had nothing under the Christmas tree on Christmas morning. The money donated went towards funding Christmas parties, providing hot food and a party atmosphere for children and young people who would get little cheer on Christmas Day. Thanks to our generous donors we were also able to purchase panto tickets for a post-Christmas treat.

If you wish to support the appeal you may do so by downloading this year's Wishlist for Essentials such as food, toiletries or gifts, toys and treats from our Operation Santa blog page

[www.operationsanta.wordpress.com/](http://www.operationsanta.wordpress.com/)

Please do share this list with family, friends and even your work colleagues, as every single donation makes a huge difference. You can also follow us on Facebook: [Operationsanta.Dudleyborough](https://www.facebook.com/Operationsanta.Dudleyborough). Please do join the blog or our Facebook page as we share lots of updates about how the appeal is going and stories about the appeal. You can also look at reports from previous years to see who has donated and who the appeal has helped.

We hope 2017 will be another record-breaking year and Blaze Hair, who have supported this campaign for the past 6 years by collecting new/unused toys, books, games, clothes & toiletry sets, have decided that this year they are going bigger than ever by creating their own sponsored event: The Jingle Bell Run! The Christmas themed run/jog/walk is 7.5 miles long and will take place in early December starting from Blaze Hair and ending in Kinver! All money raised will be given straight to Operation Santa to buy brand new presents or used to provide children with much deserved Christmas parties!

If you would like to sponsor one of the Blaze Angels and support the appeal, please contact Brett and his team at the Salon on 01384 70048 (Tues-Sat)

## AND FINALLY....



# WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

A STORYTELLING SPACE

*Do you want to share your great work with the world? Inspire others to support your work? Do you need more time to reflect and write?*

Join Becky and Helena from Dudley CVS for a free monthly drop-in developed to help voluntary organisations, charities and active citizens tell engaging stories for blogs, newsletters, press releases.

This will be a place to get started, develop your skills and get some friendly support over a cuppa. There is no need to come every month, just drop in when you need to! Our next event will take place on the **26th October** at Gather Dudley.

**i** For more details visit:  
[www.interests.me/org/dudleycvs/story/16701](http://www.interests.me/org/dudleycvs/story/16701)

Would you like to hear more about news and events from Dudley CVS? Why not subscribe to our e-bulletin: [www.interests.me/org/dudleycvs](http://www.interests.me/org/dudleycvs). If you would like to share your good news stories, successful collaborations or upcoming activities, we would love to hear from you, please contact our Communications Officer at [comms@dudleycvs.org.uk](mailto:comms@dudleycvs.org.uk)

## This echo was brought to you by...

### DUDLEY CVS TEAMMEMBERS:

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 @dylvenue

### BRIERLEY HILL CIVIC HALL:

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Dudley CVS is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee

Place of registration: England

Company number: 1998105 Charity number: 517766

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