

Compass Recovery College

A mental health and wellbeing organisation

January 2022

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Last term was a busy one for Compass. Here are some of our highlights

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What impact did Compass have last term ?

This term we are offering a number of new co-produced workshops, such as **Living with Bipolar Disorder**, **Becoming More Resilient**, **Emotional First Aid** and **Managing Chronic Pain**.

We will also be offering **Managing your Mental Health Medication** with Mona Qassim from Prospect Park Hospital Pharmacy and **Wellness Planning for Carers**. We are also introducing **Coffee and Chat for Under 25s** at the University of Reading. Full details can be found in our [schedule](#) and [prospectus](#) and you can register for a workshop [here](#)

Roz Khoshe (Happy Day)

Compass provides wellbeing support to recently arrived Afghan Refugees

We were very pleased to be invited by the DWP to provide wellbeing support to refugees from Afghanistan, who are currently being housed locally. With our creative partners, artist Lisa-Marie Gibbs and Jude Haste from Rank and File Theatre, we spent some lovely mornings and afternoons in small groups for women and for men, each week, in October and November.

After initial conversations with the Afghans, we found that they were keen to try new activities and explore their creativity whilst in this period of transition.

Through creative activities such as creative writing, needlework and art, we aimed to be responsive to needs of individuals. We started every session with “what do you feel like doing today?”, with Jude and Lisa-Marie having plenty up their sleeves to provide an enjoyable and meaningful couple of hours.

Participants welcomed the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings through creativity, as well as make connections with others - both those in their cohort and us from outside. Their beautiful pieces of writing, art and needlework reflect their resilience in times of uncertainty and stress, as well as their optimism for the future.

It was also a time to relax and have fun. Despite no Farsi or Pashto on our part and varying amounts of English on theirs, good will, smiles, a dog-eared phrase book and a digital translation tool ensured plenty of laughter and connection through recognition of shared experience.

We concluded our time there for this year, with a ‘Happy Day’ celebration, where music, food and tea were shared and participants reflected on their creative achievements, which were on display.

We thank this group for welcoming us and we look forward to seeing them again soon this January to expand on our workshops.

Fiona and Ashley - Compass Recovery Workers



Reaching Young People

As a Recovery College we've spent the last few months expanding and targeting our support for young people in Reading with amazing partnerships with **Activate Learning** and **Reading University Students' Union (RUSU)**.

Starting in September, our Recovery Workers attended Reading College's Social Care and Early Years classes to hold workshops introducing the students to different aspects of mental health and well-being. Focusing on the needs of the class, Compass created and presented workshops each week to help the students understand their own mental health, and in turn how they can use their own studies to help others.



Beginning at the start of January, Compass is teaming up with RUSU to hold a **Under 25's Coffee & Chat** within the university campus. Mental well-being among students is unfortunately at an all-time low due to the pandemic and we want to be there for support. Our Coffee & Chat sessions will give the students a safe space to socialise and chat about their mental health.

Compass has also teamed up with **Brighter Future For Children** to bring their workshops to their new **Young Persons' Hub** located in the town centre. Our Recovery Workers will be holding well-being sessions with young adults there to help them better understand their own mental health and help foster a positive environment for those who need it.

We're excited to announce the first dates for our **free voluntary sector training and support** beginning in the new year. This training is for all community sector volunteers and staff alike, to boost knowledge, understanding and self-resilience in their own mental health.

Self-Care

In this session we will use yoga and breathwork practices to care for ourselves. We will listen to our needs as supporters with kindness and begin to care for those needs as a priority both for ourselves and the people we support.

Professional Boundaries

This session explores how voluntary sector staff and volunteers can set professional boundaries when working with mental health challenges and provide a safe and secure environment from which to work with our service users.

Resetting from stress

In this session we will look at how experiencing stress and supporting others in distress can affect us. We will use yoga to reset and restore our own equilibrium, bringing both calmness and energy into our daily lives.

Emotional Boundaries

This session explores how as volunteers and voluntary sector staff we can establish emotional boundaries that support our own wellbeing when supporting others. We need to understand how to attend to our own self-care to avoid burnout and compassion fatigue and to identify when our wellbeing is being compromised.

These sessions will be running online through January and February. Full details and registration details can be found [on our website](#).

Compass Community Grants

We are excited to announce we're taking our next step in supporting mental health and wellbeing in Reading. In January we will be offering small grants to successful applicants from voluntary and community groups to create a wellbeing support structure for those who have been disproportionately affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. This funding has been allocated by Reading Borough Council's Clinically Extremely Vulnerable fund and will consist of three small fund pots of £1000 to be distributed to three community groups within Reading.

Successful community groups will co-create bespoke workshops around mental health and well-being. They will be designed collaboratively between Compass and community leaders, volunteers and staff to ensure they reflect what support is needed.



Compass has forged a partnership with Reading's "[Wild Being for Health](#)" Social Prescribing programme to offer creative workshops with the wonderful Museum of English Rural Life ([MERL](#)). Last term we collaborated to offer the very first Singing For Health workshop, designed for those living with the long term effects of COVID-192.

Under the warm guidance of professional English folk singer and fiddle player, Jackie Oates, the Singing for Health group met over six Wednesday afternoons to sing folk songs and sea-shanties.

Jackie discussed the therapeutic qualities of singing with the group, illustrated with enjoyable Christmas Carols and entertaining folk songs. We bonded through harmonising and the joy of connecting through the warmth of Scottish songs in the MERL's wonderfully acoustic studio.



Jackie's vocal tuition saw the group connect through singing together. We discussed how singing in a group can help us through the very difficult social isolation that we all felt through lockdown and COVID restrictions. The group finished every week's session in the MERL Café, sharing their joy of singing and harmonising and making new friends.

We hope the workshop can be run again in the Summer of 2022. This term we will be returning to the MERL for **Reading for Health**, which brings participants together to enjoy great poetry and prose and relate them to objects in the museum, and **Creative Art :Wilding Hearts and Healing**, which will explore the themes and collections of the museum and use them as inspiration for creative responses. The programme will give opportunities to explore drawing, painting, collage, arts appreciation and much more and celebrate the power of the arts and heritage for healing and wellbeing. Full details can be found in [our schedule](#) and [prospectus](#) and you can register for them [here](#). We do look forward to hearing from you soon!

For many people, Christmas and the New Year can be a particularly difficult and stressful time. This year, the pandemic is making life even more uncertain, so people may be feeling low in January and February. Its also a time when we tend to reflect on the year that has passed and think about our goals for the future, such as losing weight, getting fit or better organised. Often this can lead us to setting ourselves unrealistic goals which only make us feel worse when we don't meet them, reinforcing negative thoughts and not supporting us in making real change.

Here are some simple suggestions for taking care of yourself from

- Talk to someone. If you would rather talk someone who is not family or a friend, [Samaritans](#) are available 24 hours a day and [CALM](#) is available from 5pm to midnight every day. [Depression Xpression](#) hold monthly peer support meetings in Reading and online on Zoom,
- If you are going to set goals for the new year, start small and make sure they are achievable. Make them measurable so you know you have reached them and choose something you really care about. Break them into specific actions and schedule them in.
- If things don't go to plan, be kind to yourself - try talking to yourself as you would to a dear friend and challenge those negative thoughts. [Suggestions for how to reframe them are here](#). And remember no-one is perfect.
- Try and block out some time for yourself to do something relaxing and meaningful to you
- Keep a gratitude journal. Try writing down three good things about the day before you go to bed.
- Check out the five ways to wellbeing - [Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Learn and Give](#)

We are offering a number of workshops designed to support you over what can be a difficult time, such as **Winter Blues, Low Mood and Depression**, which looks at ways to support your mental and physical health and helps us create an environment that can lift our mood when we are feeling low. **Emotional First Aid** helps us tend to our feeling and know what to do to make them better. **Yoga** can help us relax and find a positive frame of mind through gentle movement and breathwork.

Full details of these and our other wellbeing and creative workshops can be found in [our prospectus](#) and [our schedule](#).

You can read more here :

[New Year, New Me: Why reinventing yourself in 2022 might be bad for your mental health \(from Patient.info\)](#)

[About Seasonal Affective Disorder \(from Mind\)](#)