



Welcome to this edition of our Newsletter.

Spring brings new beginnings! Discover some exciting opportunities with three new paid posts, get updates on the life-changing work of Gateway Trust Counselling, Art4All, and our Foodbank; and note the dates for an important Art Exhibition at Clitheroe Castle and our latest safeguarding training. We also share a bittersweet farewell to some cherished members of our community.

THINKING ALLOWED

Opportunities and challenges for our counselling service

Ali Groves knew exactly what she wanted to do when she qualified as a counsellor back in 2015. Having lived in Clitheroe much of her life, she realised that many people in the Ribble Valley desperately needed help with their mental health. But long NHS waiting lists and expensive private counselling services meant that they



were having to struggle on without the support they needed. Ali had seen evidence of that when she was a volunteer at the Foodbank. So as a committed Christian she believed that she was being called to set up an 'affordable' counselling service for the Valley. That call seemed to be confirmed when RVGT agreed to take her project under its wing. Space was found for an office and counselling rooms at St James' Church and GT Counselling came into being.



Ali Groves, who is retiring as the Manager of GT Counselling after nearly 7 years in post.

For Ali, as a counsellor, there was an attraction in being part of a team of counsellors. There was mutual support and encouragement, and the opportunity to work with student counsellors as part of their training. Since its inception GT Counselling has worked with over 280 clients, and most clients attend on average for about 12 sessions. Some though, often those suffering deep trauma, need many more sessions and only stop coming when they feel they are ready. Ali always says ‘if it is working for you, we will keep working with you’. Real healing takes time, and the warm welcome given by the voluntary ‘welcomers’ is a key part of that process.

But the counselling service faces challenges as well as opportunities. Ali says she has struggled with the level of demand for counselling from day one. She deliberately doesn’t advertise the service and has had to close the waiting list twice in the last few years. The rise in demand is due to a number of things, but Ali believes the on-going consequences of COVID, and the issues the NHS is having with counselling waiting lists, means more people are looking elsewhere for help with their mental health.

And there is so much more that could be done. If partnership funding was available, the service could offer some payment to their qualified counsellors, so they didn’t have to work for free. This might entice more counsellors, and specialist counsellors to join the service.



Ali regularly meets people who say that GT Counselling made a major difference to their lives because of the Christian care and counselling they received. And that has made it all so worthwhile. We are going to miss her commitment and her pioneering leadership.

You can find out more about Gateway Trust Counselling at: gatewaytrustcounselling.co.uk



The *Church Times* has reported that the part played by churches and faith groups in “social prescribing” — connecting people to community-based activities to benefit their well-being — presents a possible pathway for improving health outcomes. Quoting a report from the think tank Theos, published in January, the newspaper said that “NHS and social care services in England are stretched to breaking point, grappling with record-high demand for GP appointments and secondary care services. Yet, one in five GP appointments are not for medical reasons, but rather requests for help with issues like loneliness, housing, or debt.”

Church groups are keen to be involved in this kind of work, the report says, “because at a community level they believe in ‘loving their neighbour’ as part of their Christian social action.”

You can read the full report here: theosthinktank.co.uk/cmsfiles/Report---Creating-a-Neighbourhood-Health-Service.pdf

FACTS AND FIGURES

495

*the number of **Foodbank** vouchers issued between Christmas and the middle of February*

1280

the number of people fed as a result

281

*the number of clients seen at **Gateway Trust Counselling** in the last six years*

10

the number of voluntary counsellors who regularly meet with clients

50

*the number of acrylic and pastel works of art created in **Art4All** inspired by David Hockney*

150

the number of lino prints produced

26

the number of ceramic pots decorated using ceramic pens and acrylics

CARING FOR THE VULNERABLE

The importance of safeguarding has hit the headlines recently and failings in that important area for the Church of England led to the resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury last year. Lead Trustee for safeguarding, Nick Shelley explains why it is a priority for RVGT.

Safeguarding isn't just a policy; it's the heartbeat of a Christian charity, reflecting our unwavering commitment to love and protect those less able to protect themselves, especially children and vulnerable adults. It's not merely a legal requirement, but echoes the Biblical imperative to care for the vulnerable. By prioritizing safeguarding, we develop trust with our volunteers, the wider community and most importantly those using the service, demonstrating that we are committed to their well-being. This commitment empowers individuals to fully engage with our projects, knowing they are safe and valued.



Strong safeguarding practices aren't just about identifying and preventing harmful behaviour; they're about unleashing the full potential of our work, allowing us to truly embody Christ's love and make a lasting, transformative impact on the world. Let safeguarding be the driving force behind everything we do, creating a culture where everyone feels safe, cherished, and empowered to thrive.

There are three safeguarding training sessions available soon, all at St James' Church in Clitheroe.

Contact your project manager if you have not done RVGT safeguarding training within the last three years to book for a session you are able to attend.

*Saturday 5th April 2025: 10am-12pm
Thursday 15th May 2025: 6pm – 8pm
Saturday 14th June 2025: 10am-12pm*

“By prioritizing safeguarding, we develop trust with our volunteers, the wider community and most importantly those using the service, demonstrating that we are committed to their well-being”

If you are aware of a safeguarding issue regarding someone involved in the work of RVGT, please contact the project manager in the first place or email: safeguarding@rvgt.org.uk

CURRENT VACANCIES

Ribble Valley Gateway Trust currently has three vacancies for paid roles and you may have seen the adverts elsewhere, but just in case you didn't, here they are again....



Ribble Valley Gateway Trust is looking for a passionate, experienced, qualified counsellor to join our team as **Manager of the Gateway Trust Counselling service.**

This is an exciting opportunity to lead and develop a well-respected counselling provision that has brought high quality counselling services to people who ordinarily would not be able to afford to access that privately. Working with a committed team of volunteer counsellors and also a faithful team of volunteer welcomers who support the provision of a safe, supportive, welcoming environment, the successful candidate will help to coordinate the service provision and allocate clients to the most appropriate counsellor.



We are also looking for a passionate, experienced individual to join our team as **Foodbank Manager**, to support the running and development of the Trussell Foodbanks held at Clitheroe and Longridge.

The successful candidate will be managing a team of around 90 enthusiastic volunteers with substantial experience of delivering the service,

and will be well supported by the Trust's Operational Manager and the Board of Trustees. In this role you would be instrumental in providing much needed support to vulnerable individuals and families across the Ribble Valley, as we seek to End Hunger Together.

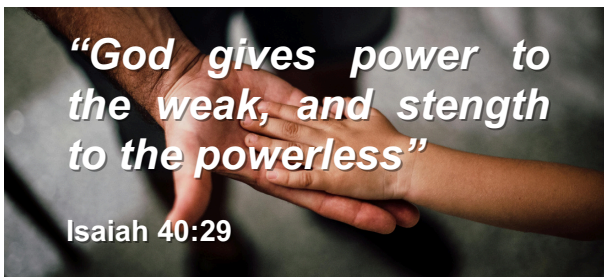
3

And finally we are looking for an **Operations Manager**, to support the running of the Trust; the work of the Foodbank, Art4All and Gateway Trust Counselling; as well as supporting the expansion of the Trust to develop further projects across the district. The post holder will line manage the project managers as well as working with church leaders and other key stakeholders to develop funding streams and recruit volunteers.

For further information about these roles please see our website at www.rvgt.org.uk/vacancies

Closing date: Friday 14th March 2025

PAUSE FOR THOUGHT

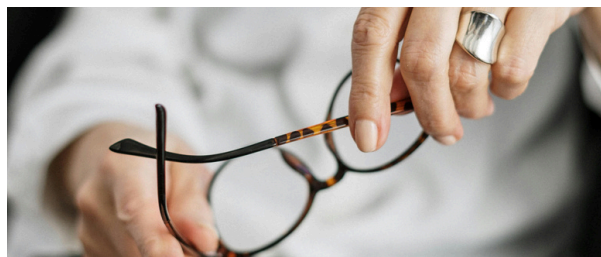


“God gives power to the weak, and strength to the powerless”

Isaiah 40:29

If you have any news or notes you want to share with other RVGT volunteers or supporters please email: communication@rvgt.org.uk

LEARNING BY DOING



Natalie Marsden is currently doing a counselling course at UCLAN, and as part of that is a student counsellor at Gateway Trust Counselling. She has been involved for almost a year and has really appreciated the experience.

My student counsellor role at Gateway Trust Counselling has been extremely rewarding and I feel privileged to be part of such an amazing service and community. Working alongside such a fantastic team, Ali and Emily have been incredibly supportive, kind and excellent role models. I feel lucky to have come across this welcoming, calming environment and the supportive service they offer.

We are very grateful to all the individuals, organisations, societies, churches and companies who have donated food, money or other gifts to any of our projects recently. Your support really makes a difference to the lives of those who are struggling at the moment.

The Trustees are committed to good governance and are grateful for the report from TrustAdvice and the opportunity to improve our governance.

February 2025



We wanted to let you know that the RVGT Trustees approached TrustAdvice, an independent HR agency recommended by Trussell, to ask them to look at the way we managed the HR issue which emerged at the Foodbank last year. We have now received their report. Although it was addressed to the Trustees we wanted to make you aware of it.

If you know someone who will have difficulty reading this newsletter online, please ask a project manager for a print copy. Audio copies of the newsletter are also available by contacting: communication@rvgt.org.uk You can download this and previous editions of the Newsletter from: rvgt.org.uk/news

It does contain specific comments relating to individuals which the Board is not able to make public. But we are content that the following represents a fair summary of TrustAdvice's findings:

- ☒ The report found that the Trustees acted in good faith throughout.
- ☒ Some recommendations were made regarding tightening up on HR procedures and the Trustees have taken note of these.
- ☒ Suggestions were made regarding delegated authority and making it clearer what falls within an employee's remit and what would require Board approval. Again, the Trustees have taken note of these.
- ☒ Suggestions were made around communication between Trustees and from Trustees to staff, including not using personal email addresses for RVGT communications. We have already implemented these suggestions.

LANCASHIRE LANDSCAPES

You may remember reading in the last edition of our Newsletter about the trip made to the Hockney exhibition at Salts Mill by some of our Art4All students. They were certainly inspired and came back to Clitheroe eager to create a Hockney inspired exhibition of their own.



The result of their hard work is now on show at the Trinity Hub in Clitheroe and you may recognise some of the local places given the Hockney treatment.

Dates for your diary: Saturday 3rd May to Saturday 31st May - the Art4All annual exhibition at the Steward's Gallery at Clitheroe Castle. All welcome!



If you know someone who would benefit from our classes, please get in touch. ribblevalleyartforall@gmail.com

QR CORNER

Art4All



Foodbank



GT Counselling



RVGT website



MORE ART4ALL NEWS



Sadly Pauline, a keen Art4All student died at the end of the year, suddenly and very peacefully, at the age of 53. She was a shining light and, in her memory, there is going to be a special display at this year's annual exhibition.

Congratulations to George who has left Art4All recently after getting a part time job as a waiter at *Eight at Gazegill*. His exuberance and joy will be missed but the confidence he has developed at Art4All will stand him in good stead in his new role.



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The Ribble Valley Gateway Trust is a Christian organisation and exists to serve the communities of the Ribble Valley through its three main projects: Ribble Valley Foodbank, Gateway Trust Counselling, and Ribble Valley Art4All.



contact@rvgt.org.uk



www.rvgt.org.uk

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