

KeyRing News

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Becoming Trainers

Earlier this year, a group of KeyRing Members and self advocates came together to take part in a course that is part of the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training on Learning Disability and Autism.



The course is named after Oliver who was a young man who was autistic and had a learning disability. He died in hospital because staff were not trained to understand what he needed. The training is for people working in health and social care to make sure they give good care and support to autistic people and people with a learning disability.

The course that the Members and self advocates did was about how to deliver this training to people working in health and social care.

In total there were three days of training. They now have the paperwork they need to say that they are qualified trainers, registered with NHS England.

Members and self advocates will start by delivering this training to KeyRing staff, but they can also deliver it to people and organisations outside KeyRing.

Their first session was with KeyRing staff in Warrington and their second was for staff in Grimsby. They are paid for their work and their travel expenses.

Simon Evans travelled from Bexley to Milton Keynes to do the training. *"The journey was a bit of an adventure! We got to Milton Keynes and the train left with us still on it, we had to get the train back from Crewe."*

The training was very very interesting. We learned all about Oliver McGowan and what happened to him.

It was nice to get out of Bexley. I loved the training. I thought it was a really good idea. It's changed my life a bit more. Staff will get training on it as well and then we will work together."





Jenny Cashman travelled from North London: *"I felt so sorry for Oliver, that no one knew how ill he was. That's why the training is so important. We completed the training and we are now officially co-trainers. I've got my certificate now. I loved the training and meeting everyone very much!"*

Other Members and self advocates said:

"It was good training; I enjoyed meeting new people and staff. It was a sad story about Oliver; doctors gave him the wrong tablets. I think Oliver would've had a good life in the future." – **Sean T, Rotheram**

"It was very interesting but sad. It is a shame he (Oliver) is not here now." – **Justine, Bexley**

"I loved the training; it opened my eyes. I learnt a lot and it was brilliant training because we have all become co-trainers and we get to deliver it (the OMMT) plus we get a certificate and get to train KeyRing staff." – **Anthony, Birmingham**

"I enjoyed the training, I learned new things and it's important that others know how to look after people with disabilities. Also, it was good to meet new people like me." – **Samuel, Selby**

"I loved the training, especially meeting all the wonderful people. The most exciting part was missing our stop and ending up in Crewe!" – **Rodney, Bexley**

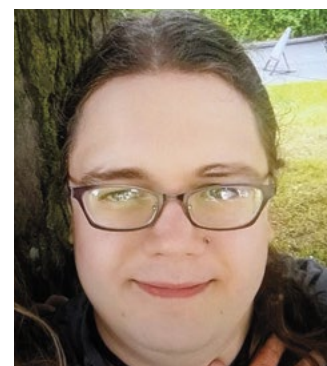


Dawn, who ran the training, travelling with Sam and Jodie

"The training provided by KeyRing was invaluable in getting together with other autistic and learning-disabled people. It was an enlightening and comprehensive preparation for delivering the training to health professionals. I enrolled to make a difference to the lives of disabled people and I found new ways of looking at myself and others" – **Leigh, Sheffield**

"I found it very interesting. I learnt a lot that I didn't already know. I can't wait to start training people up." – **Kim, Bath**

Remembering Chris

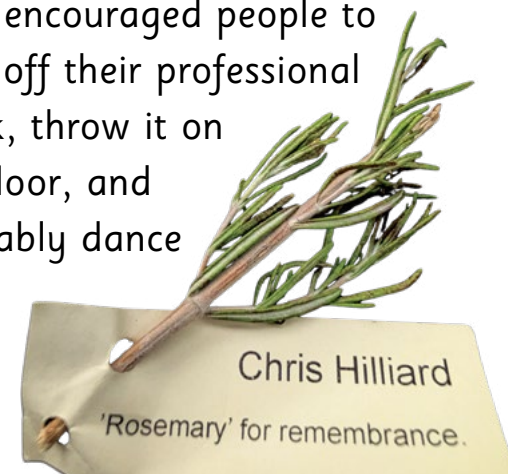


Chris Hilliard was involved in the Oliver McGowan training, but sadly passed away

recently. Tracy Hammond from KeyRing had worked with them and shared some memories of them at their wake.

Tracy explained how Chris had worked from the top down to change policy and from the bottom up to change practice, she touched on how because of them, people in prison will be having better days, Tracy spoke about the glint in Chris' eye and the thrill of a discussion with them.

She laughed about how many people had come to her asking if she thought they were neurodivergent following a conversation with Chris, and how they encouraged people to take off their professional mask, throw it on the floor, and probably dance on it too.



Rosemary sprigs were given out in memory of Chris

The Haringey Digital Hub

The Haringey Hub in London ran an 8 week Digital Skills Hub. The hub supported 16 people, a mix of KeyRing Members and other people from the local community. Their ages ranged from 25 to 90 years old! Everyone was provided with a digital tablet.

At the end of the 8 weeks:

- * 94% of people said that they will go online more as a result of getting their device.
- * 86% of people said they feel like they have more knowledge about tech as a result of the training.
- * 94% of people said they were more confident using technology.
- * 75% of people said that after receiving the device and training they feel better able to manage their day-to-day life.
- * 75% of people said they felt more independent after the device and training, with 58% of people saying it made them feel less isolated.



The hub getting to grips with the new technology



Adbisi (90!) practising with her tablet

We asked people what they felt more confident doing after the sessions. They said:

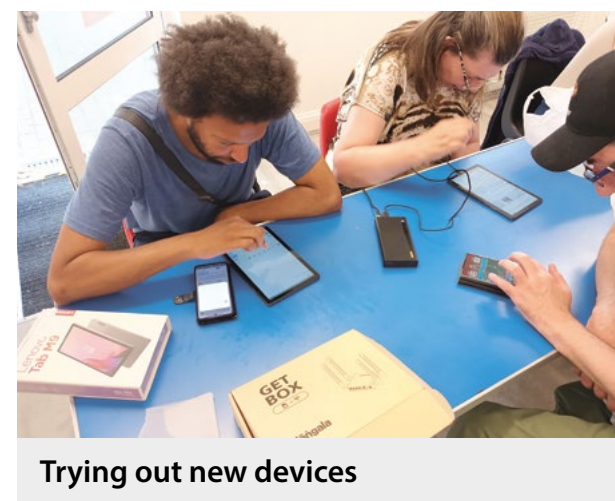
- * using emails
- * watching TV
- * online shopping
- * online banking
- * searching for jobs
- * managing health appointments
- * sending messages
- * using social media

Some of the people who came to the hub said:

"The sessions have been good for bringing people together. We've been helping one another as well as with Lee helping us."

"We're hoping the Wi-Fi signal improves soon. It's been so productive, we have a 90 year old person in this class. It's made my day that a 90 year old has been able to sit down and try and use a tablet because of this class - I'm inspired by that."

"This training meant a lot to me because I learned more on the tablets that I didn't know before."



Trying out new devices

"I can access a lot of apps now to do online shopping without being tied down to my computer. Coming on the training has let me interact with my residents and neighbours I would not normally interact with. It's been a good social hub to come on the training which I've enjoyed."

"The device is simple to use and makes me feel more confident."

THANK YOU

A big thank you to AbilityNet and BT, who provided everyone at the hub with a new tablet to learn on!

Seeing the Gladiators with a new friend

● By Kathryn Littlewood

Steven had some tickets for a recording of Gladiators, and was looking for someone to go with him. Michael is our new Connect member in Sheffield. Michael loves to go out and do exciting things and is super helpful.

Steven and Michael had only met once, but we thought that it would be a good match for them to go together. They met at Burger King at 9am and joined the queue. By 12, they were in the arena, having a wonderful time together.

Steven says *"What a nice guy Michael is, he's so friendly and talkative. He will be a great KeyRing*

Member. I've got his number now so if I'm doing anything then I will text him to see if he's available to join me. We both really enjoyed it. It made his day and my day too as I had a nice person with me."

Connecting with others and making new friendships is what we are about and I am hoping that Steven and Michael will go on to be great friends.



Steven and Michael at the Gladiators arena

My Trip to London

● By Martin Rivers

I am really interested in the Titanic, and in August I went to an exhibition called the Legend of Titanic, at Dock X in London. Once I got to London from Newcastle I had free travel with my bus pass on TFL (Transport for London).



Martin at the exhibition

I booked the accommodation and rail fare, negotiated the London Underground and met some lovely Londoners along the way. The only disappointment was I paid £60 and found out breakfast was not included, and I didn't buy any food cos London is mega busy and expensive.

Being autistic I coped well, especially around Parliament Square with all the crowds.

I ended up at an extra stop at Westminster Abbey for a loo stop. There was no admission fee and I was allowed in for free. It's amazing what happens when you've got a white cane!

Then onto a River Thames cruise to Greenwich and I was also allowed in free to the Cutty Sark, a historic ship you can visit.

Then home - all of this in two days! I'm really proud of myself.

The KeyRing Boccia Championship

● By Mark Turner

In 2023 KeyRing was given some funding from Sport England to set up a Boccia league. In March the project came to an end with a grand tournament!



What a lovely day it was, six teams came from all over the UK to Derby to play.

The day started with us all meeting each other and having teas and coffees together and then we were straight into the competition where each team played two games.

We then went and had lunch together whilst making new friends.

After lunch, all the teams played to get their positions on the leaderboard.

In the final it was **Rotherham** versus **Frome** and after a very tight game where in the last round both teams were neck and neck, Frome just won it by two points.

It was a long but great day and in the end everyone who took part was a winner. See you all next year.



The Rotherham team



Frome - the winning team!



Your Photos...



Congratulations to **Michelle**, who came second in the Easter quiz at Speak Up for All.



Michelle with her certificate

She was also given a certificate for 'always being so kind and caring to all' at the Macintyre Friendship Group.

Anthony Fish, from **South Gloucestershire** took a trip to Anfield, Liverpool FC in June.



Anthony and the trophy

"I travelled up on the train to Liverpool FC to have my picture taken with the Premier League trophy which they won last season."

I had a chance to look around Liverpool whilst up there around the docks and City. I loved it and really enjoyed it but it was very hot that day, it was a dream come true to see the trophy".

A Member in London would like to go to the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow next year. **Jason** would like to see if there are any Members who would be interested in going with him.



Jason

"The main events I'd like to catch are the gymnastics, swimming and track and field. I'm happy to travel by coach or train. If you're interested please contact my support worker, Angela."

07908 103 752
angela.williams@keyring.org



Jon and the Carabao Cup

Jon Brown has also been to the football: *"I had my photo taken with the Carabao Cup with my brother and niece in the hospitality suite."*

New Member Chelsie took part in a craft session making sea creatures. They will be displayed at **Art in the Park in Leamington Spa** in August.



Chelsie (centre) crafting

News from Rotherham



Members enjoyed a **Caribbean** themed night out.



The Rotherham Hub had a visit from **Kath**, **KeyRing's Team Development and Coaching Lead**, and **Kim**, the new **Area Manager for Rotherham**.



Gary and **Peter** have been volunteering at their local **Cancer Research** shop which they are both enjoying. They met **John Healey MP** when he came to visit. They have also been fundraising and received a certificate for their hard work.

South London Summer Barbecue

● By Peckham Hub Members

On 30th July, Members from South London came together to celebrate summer with a barbecue.



It was organised by us, the Peckham Hub Members. We spent about a month planning it. Nick, Sally and Claire went shopping together to get the food. They bought crisps, burgers, rolls, soft drinks and veggie sausages. They also got cheese for the burgers but this got left in the fridge! Josie gave it out to people to take home at the end.



Lara brought a salad she had made – it disappeared quickly! Josie made a potato salad and our support worker Tim was on security!

Bob was our DJ. He played really good music, we just missed our Elvis impersonator, Nick. He'll perform again for us at Christmas.



We held it at SET Social, where we meet for our hub, and used the barbecue they have there. We wanted to welcome new Members. Members from other parts of South London came as well.

Claire has started coming to the hubs to see if she wants to join KeyRing. She said: "I met Bob

at another event and he invited me. It was my first time meeting people. I felt anxious at first, until I started to get to know people. Bob was really friendly, which helped."

Femi has recently joined KeyRing. He said "It was good. I made new friends. It was the first time I'd joined an event. I live in Camberwell so I cycled there. I like the hub. It's a good place. I'm going to the Bede House barbecue with other Members next week."

Lara's Salad



Lara's salad was really popular, so we asked her for the recipe!

"It was very simple. I mixed sweetcorn, peppers, chickpeas, onion, sultanas and apples. The dressing was just lemon juice, lime juice and oil."



Reflections of an Addict

My name is **Derek McBride** and I first became a Member of KeyRing in 2009. This is my story of how I used to be alcohol dependent. But not anymore.

Moving to Bath

I grew up in Belfast, Northern Ireland. After my parents died I moved to Bath, as my sister lived there. I had no job, no friends and little to do. This was when I started to buy a bottle of cider each morning. This soon increased to two or three.

I had lived in Belfast during 'the troubles'. A civil war with gunmen and bombs terrorizing the city. I had experienced things I wanted to forget. However, the memories and feelings of that time haunted me. I would get flashbacks and post-traumatic stress.

Alcohol became my friend

Alcohol became my friend. Because it protected me from the memories and feelings of the past. It helped me forget. At some point, the drink took hold. Not a day went by when I didn't drink. I completely relied on it to get me through each day. I wanted to give up. But somehow the drink just wouldn't let me.



Derek in his new home

Then, a few years ago things began to change and my past caught up with me. I found myself at rock bottom. I was struggling to look after myself or my home. Professionals got involved. I was told I had to go to a place of rehabilitation. It meant I had to leave behind my old life in Bath and the people and places I knew. This was very scary.

Using my faith and my sense of humour

My KeyRing support suggested I take my two most powerful weapons with me, in order to help me get through it. They were my faith in God, and my sense of humour. This I did. And it really helped me get through my darkest days. By the end of my rehab I was so thankful for the help from everyone there, staff and other residents.

My life's belongings were in two carrier bags

I returned to Bath. My life's belongings were in two carrier bags. I didn't have a home of my own. With help from a couple of organisations, I started to get the help I needed. I attend a few support groups each week. And with support from KeyRing, I now have a new home. I have great neighbours and people who care about me. I look after my home and take care of myself. I feel so blessed to have had another chance.

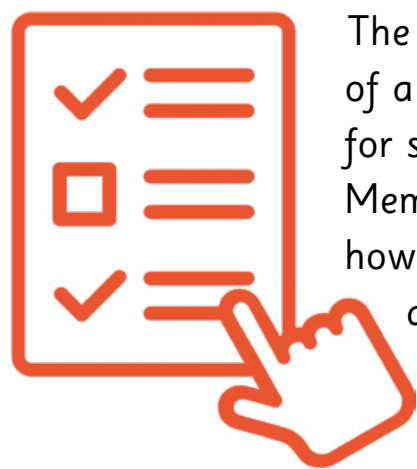
Why I wrote this

I wrote this because I want people to know, however hard life gets, **no matter the challenges you may face, there is always hope** things can eventually be better. Change is possible.

Member Voice Update

In the last edition we told you about the first Member Voice meeting which had been held in South London. Since then, there has been a follow up meeting in London and another meeting in Bristol.

› In LONDON some of the things we looked at were:



The results of a survey for staff and Members about how they feel about KeyRing.

- * We were pleased to see that most Members are treated with kindness.
- * The question about whether KeyRing helped people to build friendships had a lower result. We talked about why this might be.

Complaints

- * We discussed whether complaints were good or bad. We said it was useful to hear about things and decide if action needs to be taken.
- * We said that we'd had 5 complaints in the last three months. That's good but not if it means we don't know about complaints people have.
- * We looked at how the Member Handbook helps us to make complaints and thought a session on how to make complaints would be useful.

› In BRISTOL Members talked about:

Language

- * The group talked about words like Member, Co-production and Community.
- * They thought about whether the word 'Member' was a good word. We liked that it meant more than just using a service. Some of us weren't really all that bothered what we were called. But we all had good things to say about being a Member.

The next Member Voice meeting will be in September.

Complaining to KeyRing

If you are not happy with something at KeyRing you can tell your support worker.

If you do not feel happy to speak with your support worker or you do not agree with what they said then you can speak with their manager. They will keep a record of what you have said and what has been agreed.

We also have a **feedback form** called **Making Your Voice Count** that you can complete if you would rather not speak with anyone local. This form will go straight to Michelle on the KeyRing leadership team.

If you want to speak with Michelle, you can contact her by email at michelle.lloyd@keyring.org or phone on **07974 673 154**.



You can find out more in our Complaints Policy. Use the QR code or ask your support worker for a copy.

Out of Hours Number



To speak to someone out of hours you can call **0333 0000 321** or text **07506 628 693**.

News from the Trustees

The Trustees met on 7th June in London. We have 2 online meetings and 2 meetings a year where everyone meets up, this keeps costs down. It is important for the trustees to spend time together and develop their skills.

Developing powerful questions

In June the Trustees used the afternoon session to improve their skills on developing powerful questions with a trainer. Trustees need to look closely at what the KeyRing leadership team are doing and make sure that they are confident that KeyRing is well led. This means they need to be confident in asking questions, especially the difficult ones and that is what makes them effective critical friends for KeyRing.

Visits to meet KeyRing Members



Trustee Paul and the Sheffield Hub

The Trustees also talked about their visits to meet KeyRing Members. **Brian** had been to

Gateshead and joined a session with the Employment Advisor, **Nick** had visited **Oldham**, **Paul** went to **Sheffield** and **Andrea** had visited **Bexley**. Trustees wanted to thank everyone who has made them so welcome on their visits and are looking forward to their upcoming visits to **Grimsby**, **Rotherham**, **Frome**, **Bristol** and **Southwark**.

Brian's visit to Gateshead



I visited the Gateshead Hub on 30th April and was welcomed by **Susan Jones**

and **Tricia Robinson**, support workers. I briefly met six Members.

The Hub was having a session with the **Disability Employment Advisor** from the local Job Centre. This was clearly a hugely useful session for the Members as a lot of questions were answered and advice given about managing recent changes and making contact with their personal advisors.



The Gateshead Hub venue

The hub talked about things like the amount you can earn without affecting your benefits, and Access to Work funding.

Susan (the Disability Employment Advisor) was confident that the KeyRing Members who were there could all probably now earn at least £100/week before their benefit would be affected.

The cap on the number of hours worked in a week, previously 15 hours, has also been removed.

Susan also spoke a little about **Access to Work**, a government funded grant scheme that provides financial support for disabled people to help them get or stay in work. **Access to Work** aims to fund practical support, like assistive technology, work-related travel, or mental health support, to help people to overcome barriers to employment.

A super achievement by a Gateshead Network Member

● By Tricia Robinson



Philippa at her graduation

Gateshead Network Member, Philippa Falcon, recently completed her Level 4 In Integrated Health, Social Care and Wellbeing at Newcastle College.

Philippa's fellow KeyRing Members, and staff, are so proud

of Philippa – she has worked really hard, and it has resulted in a wonderful achievement.

Philippa's graduation took place at Newsatle Civic Centre on 10th July 2025.

Philippa is now planning to start her career in the care sector.

Well done, Philippa!

Philippa says: *"I was really proud of myself and I am proud because I put in the hard work and I achieved it and passed all my modules and then I am so happy I graduated."*

Sally performs in Grease on stage!

● By Sally Reid



Sally on stage

I do drama on Fridays at Stepping Stones and we've just done a show on the 18th July. The show was the musical Grease. I played the headteacher.

I've been going to the drama class at Stepping Stones for over 20 years. We do a show every year, an annual summer show.

I think I've only missed one in over 20 years. I can't remember how I first got involved – it's too long ago!

We start rehearsing in September. We meet once a week. There are other classes on different days but I go to the Friday one. They do lots of different things at Stepping Stones, which is in North Dulwich. On other days I go to digital classes and the social club. They also do art and a music group. I enjoy it. Doing the show is the best bit.

Staff and friends from the KeyRing hub came to watch: Claire, Josie, Nick, Roger and Chantay. That was really nice.

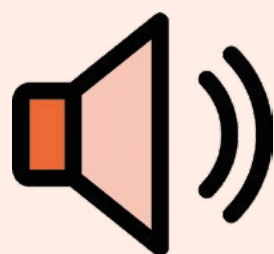
The next edition and get in touch...

That's all for this time!

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For the next edition Sarah will be visiting some areas to talk to Members about their stories.

Contact Sarah by email sarah.hatch@keyring.org



For an audio version of the paper phone 020 3119 096

Member Voice

Member Voice is a national group for people who get support from KeyRing. They do things like **share information** they can take back to their networks and hubs, **talk about experiences**, and

sometimes **go to events**. At the moment we keep in touch via WhatsApp.

To join the group ask your support worker or get in touch with Sarah at sarah.hatch@keyring.org.