



Bradford District Care  
NHS Foundation Trust



# Champions Show The Way - better lives, together

Celebrating 10 years of Champions Show the Way  
2009 - 2019

better lives, together

W: [www.bdct.nhs.uk](http://www.bdct.nhs.uk)

Twitter: @BDCFT



## First steps

It all started when a letter dropped through my letterbox. It was an invite to attend the Pulmonary Rehabilitation course run by Bradford District Care Trust. I went with mixed feelings, and quickly got into the swing of it. On my fourth week I struck up a friendship with another member of the group. When it came to my last week I thought 'what now'? I was told about 'Dance for Life', I went not expecting much, but met my friend from the pulmonary rehab group again and she told me about the Champions Show the Way walking groups. I went to Dance for Life again, this time with my friend and then we ended up at the Champions Show the Way network meeting. So, I became an accidental Champion, and it was the beginning of living again and meeting great people. I am now in a position where I am involved with different activities and helping others who are in a similar situation to where I was a few months ago.

**Community Health Champion 2013**





## Introduction

The following stories are just a few of the many hundreds of stories Champions Show the Way Volunteer Community Health Champions and group participants could tell you from the last 10 years. Champions Show the Way has been changing lives for the better! None of these benefits could have been achieved without the hundreds of amazing people who have volunteered as Community Health Champions over the years. For their commitment and passion, we are extremely grateful.

Some stories are from the perspective of the group participants and how they have benefited from the activities they have attended. Some stories are from the perspective of the Community Health Champion and the benefit they have gained from volunteering. Some stories tell the journey from group participant to Community Health Champion.

We would like to thank those that have agreed to share their stories. Some stories have been written by staff with the consent of the individual, some by the Community Health Champion themselves. Some stories have been anonymised.

## Passion to support others

**When Parveez took early retirement from working as a bus driver in 2008, he became active in the community, working on a voluntary basis at the Frizinghall Community Centre, rallying local residents to become involved in the activities and the operation of the community centre.**

Also at this time he became interested in walking, encouraging other community members to walk to improve health and well-being, avoid social isolation and to make new friends.

In 2015, Parveez experienced a life-changing event when he was diagnosed with cancer. Showing resilience and fighting spirit, Parveez came through and his cancer is now in remission. At this time Parveez wanted to use his experience with a serious illness and encourage other men in the area to take up exercise to reduce the risks of ill-health. With the support of Frizinghall Community Centre, Bradford Council and Cnet, Parveez was instrumental in the provision of exercise sessions at his local community centre, and this included the development of walks. It was through Cnet that Parveez was introduced to Champions Show the Way, who quickly realised Parveez's potential and booked him on a walk leader training course under the Walking for Health programme. This was in 2016. Since then, Parveez

has led the Frizinghall walk and, with his enthusiasm, persistence and persuasion, the group has been steadily growing. Parveez feels that, due to his personal health experiences, it is important that he continues walking to keep himself and others in his community healthy to reduce the risks of coronary heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, stress, anxiety and depression. Champions Show the Way have provided Parveez with the support to fulfil this aim.

**Community Health Champion 2016**

## The impact of motivation and enthusiasm

**Sarita was in her final year of a degree in physical activity, health and wellbeing when she became involved with Champions Show the Way.**

Sarita got involved because:

” I wanted to gain a little more experience, I wanted to do something that fitted in well with my degree course, which was set within the community and health sector. ”

An opportunity arose for a volunteer to train in the OTAGO Strength and Balance Exercise Programme, an exercise leader qualification for professionals working with older adults at risk of falls. We offered a place to Sarita and she keenly took it up.

Following completion of the course Sarita started a group at Ashcroft Medical Centre. The group has been a great success with participants improving their strength and balance and even reducing the amount they use a stick. Colin, a group participant said “Sarita is very motivating and full of life. She rubs off on the people she’s instructing. She explains and demonstrates the exercises fully, it gets in to your mind and spirit that you can do it.”

Sarita has also led an exercise class at St Cuthbert’s Church in Wrose. The group members had varying rates of fitness which Sarita was able to take into account. She set about designing a set of activities and has been gradually modifying them to suit individual group members’ needs and taste, and exploring the correct pace for the group so that it was challenging but not overly strenuous. The group found Sarita “very pleasant, a lovely character and very motivating.”

Many members reported feeling better physically as well as mentally. The group numbers actually doubled with Sarita leading it, with up to 23 people attending. Joan said: “We are a lovely group and we get on well together, we just needed the exercise to give us a chance to meet up together.” Margaret explained how it has motivated her to also do more exercise outside of the class.



She said: “It’s encouraged me to do my knee exercises [given by the physio] at home.”

This same lady explained how the exercise class was motivating her to re-focus on healthy eating too.

The group referred a lot to the wellbeing effects of tackling exercise together. Comments from the group included

” It keeps my mind active” and “it’s stimulating, you get to meet new people.”

Sarita has gone on to secure employment working for a community organisation, Health Lifestyles, where she is able to use the skills she developed through her role as a Community Health Champion.

**Community Health Champion 2016**



## The power of friendship

**The Chill & Chat group is a social group that enables people to get together and discuss any topics that the group members would like to talk about such as personal issues, health concerns or other difficulties. The participants find that discussing problems with the group can help them to deal with the issues that they face on a daily basis.**

One of the participants had been diagnosed with myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME). She found that she was looking forward to the group, every Monday morning, and the improvement in her mood was having a positive effect on the ME symptoms. She felt she was able to attend the group without causing an increase in the debilitating responsive symptoms

relating to her condition, and that it was providing a much-needed social outlet. She felt that there had been a real improvement in her quality of life, as well as gaining new friends.

Her husband also attends the group with her, he had been struggling for all his life with a condition that he had kept hidden from everyone. He suffers from severe dyslexia. This had not been identified while he was at school, and in his own words, "they just thought I was thick". This was a difficult time for him and he gained a reputation as a troublemaker. Nobody identified that he had a decent level of intelligence and his problems were down to causes other than low intelligence, character or attitude.

He continued to conceal his problem with dyslexia and this resulted in him growing up unable to read or write.



He became more and more depressed about his condition and the difficulties it caused him.

After joining the Chill & Chat group he felt able to discuss his problems with the group and was given advice, by another member, about adult literacy courses at Keighley College. He followed this advice and consulted the college, where he enrolled on a literacy course. With the help of the adult literacy course he could tackle the problems caused by his dyslexia and was able to learn to read and write.

As a couple they both expressed that the improvement in their lives started as a result of joining the Chill & Chat group with Champions Show the Way.

### **Group participants 2017**

## **The recovery journey**

**Rehana has encountered both physical and mental setbacks over the last 5 years.**

Rehana was diagnosed with kidney problems and faced long trips to the hospital for dialysis treatment on a regular basis, until she was found a suitable donor and underwent a kidney transplant back in 2013. Rehana's father had died due to kidney disease and she was living with the guilt that most transplant receivers face around who her kidney came from and the circumstances surrounding this. Rehana had also suffered a loss of a child at full term and this led her to develop severe anxiety and depression for which she was receiving treatment from specialists.



Whilst Rehana was attending Kala Sangam, she saw the Champions Show the Way activity and walk leaflets and discovered the Woodland Wanderers group. She joined the group the following week and has been with the group for over a year.

Rehana has now built up both her strength and confidence through attending these walks and sees them as a support mechanism. Rehana has now returned to her job at a supermarket and is a valued member of staff.

”

I feel that the Woodland Wanderers has helped me to maintain both exercise and my mental health by being around other people and helping me to stimulate a happy mood.

”

“Meeting new people has helped with this and has made me feel healthier and happier. I always look forward to attending the walk on Thursdays. When I’m walking, and I see nice scenery and breathe in the air, I feel peaceful and relaxed. We all get on well together and we have lunch and a catch up at the end. Everyone is friendly and polite. I would highly recommend to people who have low self-esteem or confidence to make contact with the Champions Show the Way team and especially the Woodland Wanderers group as it will make a difference in their lives. If they are recovering from physical or mental health conditions, their journey to recovery will begin here.” Rehana is now reducing her medication gradually and attributes this to her walking group.

**Group participant 2018**



## **The value of peer support**

**“I first attended a CSTW group early in 2015 after a prolonged period of physical and mental illness following surgery the previous year.**

The East Riddlesden Walkers welcomed me into their group and we enjoyed gentle level walks along the canal. These were ideal for me as I regained strength and the friendly social contact was a lifeline, as I had become very isolated and lacking in confidence.

Around this time, I also joined the Recovery and Wellbeing Group in Keighley. This provided a safe, compassionate and listening space which proved vital to my progress. In fact, I cannot overemphasise the value of properly guided peer support. It is not only the support one receives, but that which one is able to give which aids wellbeing. I gained a number of good friends from this group and only stopped attending when my improvement enabled me to start working again. For just over two years I have also attended the CSTW Creative Writing Group in Ilkley. As a professional author whose illness had prevented me from writing for some time, I hoped this would serve to revive my creativity, which indeed it did. Again, I have found numerous friends and now co-lead the group, experience which has helped me toward my goal of obtaining paid work teaching creative writing.”

**Group participant to Community Health Champion 2015**

## **Volunteering is life-changing**

**Prior to attending Craven Crafters this participant had been wheelchair-bound for 18 years following an illness which resulted in her becoming quadriplegic with movement only of the neck and head.**

The problems became so severe that she needed to be put on assisted breathing and, as she deteriorated, she was transferred to end of life care. She recovered to the point of being able to live a restricted life, always needing support workers and nurses to attend daily, and being wheelchair-bound.

Attending the group was initially very daunting, as she had been limited in her personal contacts, and had become reclusive because of her condition. Craven Crafters made her feel very welcome and she enjoyed being with the group so much that she came to a decision that she would start building a new life.

Shortly after she joined the group one of the group leaders was no longer able to continue with the group. The remaining group leader was concerned that the group would have to close, however, she immediately volunteered to become a Community Health Champion with Champions Show the Way and support the group to continue.





She has benefited from the proactive requirements and responsibility that go along with volunteering and running a group. She plans the activities and ensures that materials and equipment are all available to the group. The group members greatly appreciate her commitment and help, as both a friend and as skilled support in the craft work they are involved in creating. She has also introduced new aspects to the group, such as jewellery making.

As with all Champions Show the Way groups the peer support and friendship have extraordinary therapeutic effects. This has given her the motivation to continue to push herself to improve her health and wellbeing. Craven Crafters is one of the elements that have come together to give her the strength to succeed.

Even though there are still difficult times she is confident about maintaining her improvement. She has also started attending a Champions Show the Way art group at Central Hall in Keighley. She continues to give support and help to the other members of the group despite her own problems. However, she is committed to maintaining her own recovery and has recently been able to walk into the group, with a little assistance from her support worker – something she would never thought possible a year ago.

### **Group participant to Community Health Champion 2018**



**My strength and courage has grown so much over the past five years, it's immeasurable, thanks to Champions Show the Way. Twenty-seven years of being ill and the last five years have been the best support I've had, namely all the Champion Show the Way groups I've attended. So much to be thankful to Champions Show the Way for!**

**Group participant to Community Health  
Champion 2015**





**Bradford District Care**  
NHS Foundation Trust

**For more information about Champions  
Show the Way activities contact:**

**Phone:** 01274 321911

**Email:** [Champions@bdct.nhs.uk](mailto:Champions@bdct.nhs.uk)

**Web:** [www.bdct.nhs.uk/services/cstw](http://www.bdct.nhs.uk/services/cstw)