



Befriending Project & Public Engagement Report May 2021 to September 2021

Nicola Zielinski joined the team at Rescare in May 2021. Funding for this post (£10,000) was awarded from the Baily Thomas Charity after feedback from our parents and siblings of people with learning disabilities was that they will worry about what will happen to their family member in the future.

The funding was to support a new role to develop a pilot befriending project and to support the necessary increase in Rescare's visibility. Nicola came on board having specialised in the field of disability to support people into employment. We were pleased to take advantage of her strong business development background with advertising and brand awareness. She picked up from the work of Julie Abbot who had put in some initial focus from a trustee point of view on the marketing of Rescare during 2020.

We are pleased to report considerable progress:

Website & social media

Nicola has worked closely with IF consulting to refresh the overall [website](#) platform creating new areas for campaigns, volunteering as well as accessible buttons and developed a new online membership form.

She has increased social media engagement by creating organic weekly content and supporting national campaigns such as small charity week, learning disability week and carers week whilst developing a forward plan for social media posting. The brand has been strengthened by creating banners for all platforms and using a colour pallet which will in time become recognisable for Rescare.

Platform progress:

- [LinkedIn](#) account has **120 followers** (1 year ago- 70)
- [Facebook](#) page has **193 followers** (1 year ago- 137)
- [Twitter](#) has **414 followers** (1 year ago- 374)

Nicola has helped Rescare by joining local community groups to raise their own public profile and tie in with advertising for volunteer opportunities.

Befriending Project

Setting up to match volunteers with members who would welcome their friendship is clearly a delicate task. The project has been developed carefully from grass roots including development of a role description, renewed volunteer application forms, interview questions, advertising, and recruitment plans.

Nicola has worked alongside Katie Booth and Helen Wilman to ensure key policies and procedures are in place for our new volunteers. A new volunteer handbook has been developed and all key documents will feature in the volunteer's area of the website which will ease their access. Rescare has become part of Befriending Networks which has been very useful in our learning and development of our own project.

We have advertised the volunteer role via:

Our website; Indeed; LinkedIn; Facebook; Twitter; GMVCO; Stockport Hub; Sector 3; Do-it

Engagement has mainly come from Indeed, but we have also had interest via Facebook, LinkedIn, and Do-it.

Advertising for volunteers commenced towards the end of June, we extended our adverts until early August and now began interviewing volunteers in the middle of that month. Once training is underway, we will look to identify a small number of partners from our member body to help us in this pilot work.

Public Engagement Activities

Nicola has been sitting in on the campaign's meetings for Ravenswood and Furlong Close so that she can stay up to date with developments and raise awareness on our website and social media platforms. She has developed a "Welcome to Rescare" presentation which has been used in raising awareness to employability programmes such as Restart via Remploy, Serco, and Reed in Partnership to encourage more applications to the Rescare Befriending project. She has started to contact SEN schools and establishments to request features in school/college newsletters.

Key areas where our members are based have been identified and we have begun to establish links on social media for advertising befriending project. In addition, using the key member areas Nicola has also begun to contact local offers within local authorities across the UK so that Rescare are featured on the various local offer websites.

She has liaised closely with Helen White from [Venner](#) to spread the word of their nutritional food boxes and their platform for recipes. This featured in our recent Resnews (pg4)

Nicola has been approached by a TV broadcasting company to support a new show called the Big Clean, this may feature one of our families who requires support to declutter their homes. We see the benefit as 2-fold, ultimately it helps a family or an individual in need as well as being able to raise public awareness of Rescare across the UK.

In all this work we are happy this work is going well, and we hope to be able to report further progress in the December edition of Resnews.

Nicola Zielinski. Project and Public Engagement Officer

Dr. Katie Booth, Trustee