

TOGETHER

For Thistle Supporters • Autumn 2021

thistle
Foundation

Over the past 18 months, we've been delighted to bring you updates sharing how, with your support, we've been able to continue to be there for people living with long-term health conditions throughout the pandemic. Today, we wanted to share more about the difference you have made.



Since April 2020, **552** people have been referred to Thistle for support, and your donations have helped us to provide **1069** one-to-one wellbeing consultations during that period. That is a huge number of people taking that first step to take back control of their lives from their health condition or life circumstances.

101 people have accessed our remote wellbeing groups, including Mindfulness and our Lifestyle Management courses.

75 people have attended Tai Chi groups either online or in person, keeping active while it was difficult to do so, and we've had **1262** visits to our accessible gym across the months when we have been able to open.

However, numbers don't tell the full story. When someone is supported to make positive changes in their life, the ripple effect touches family, friends and wider communities too. The impact of your support is huge and reaches further than you may think.

Thank you.

↙ A remote wellbeing consultation



OUR ROAD TO RECOVERY

Julie Gardner, Thistle Coach and Strategic Lead, shares her insight into what people might need to recover well from the pandemic.



"I've been thinking a lot about recovery. We've all experienced the impact of the pandemic and now there is a sense of cautious optimism that we're coming through the other side and, understandably, the focus is on how we move forward. People are talking about 'getting back to normal' or adapting to the 'new normal', but how do we do that?

Without an active focus on how we recover, both individually and collectively, I believe we will continue to carry the trauma of our

pandemic experiences. This insight comes from what I am noticing and my own personal story of recovery.

In January 2017, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. There followed 10 months of intensive (and happily successful) treatment. As my treatment neared its end, the oncologist, who had been alongside me through the journey, said, 'Don't be surprised if you experience a low rather than a high when treatment ends – this is when you'll start to process what you've been through.'

While this felt hard to hear, it was extremely helpful. It gave me permission to feel what I felt, and not to force a false positivity on myself; to process what had happened and to think about how I might recover.

My recovery involved lots of talking things through, starting to do the things I loved and had missed during treatment and letting myself feel what I felt. As time went on my energy and hopefulness returned.

I'm noticing the many parallels between this experience and the current challenges of coming out of the pandemic. My invitation to you is think about what you need as you recover. What does recovery look like for you and for your family and friends? Take time to think about it and talk about it.

If we keep talking to each other about our recovery, individually and collectively, and continue to listen to each other with kindness, we can hope that our energy and hopefulness will keep increasing. And that we will all recover well."

If you are struggling with the impact of the pandemic, you can find support resources on our website: [thistle.org.uk/looking-for-support](https://www.thistle.org.uk/looking-for-support)

FIREWALK

On a chilly autumn evening in early October, we hosted our first in-person event in almost two years at our Centre of Wellbeing in Edinburgh. And what better way to combat the darkening evenings than by lighting up the coals for a group of intrepid fundraisers to walk across? The idea for the Firewalk emerged as a way to collaborate with the Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home, CHAS and Cyrenians to create a renewed sense of community after the past eighteen months. The mindset required to set your feet to fire also lines up with the Thistle way of thinking and the support we offer: finding a way to manage your fears and discover your self-belief, as well as identifying what you are capable of.

We're so grateful to all of our wonderful fundraisers and everyone who supported them. An incredible £3000 was raised for Thistle, making the world of difference to the increasing number of people referring themselves for wellbeing support. You can still support their brave efforts by going to thistle.org.uk/donate and popping 'Firewalk' in the comments. Thank you!

**An incredible
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was raised for Thistle**

"I love a challenge, so I wanted to put my tootsies to the test by walking on fire for an amazing charity. Thistle is local to me, and I want to support the fantastic work they do by raising as much as I can."

Mhairi



"We often hear from people we support who believed they couldn't do certain things but, with the right support and environment, find that something once 'impossible' is suddenly possible. So the Firewalk felt like a really fitting event for me."

Janette



Veteran Peer Volunteer Brian Brown took on an additional challenge, carrying a stretcher across the coals with his son Kieran to raise funds for both Thistle and Help for Heroes who have supported him in his recovery from PTSD.

"Thistle has done nothing but support my dad through his mental and physical battles. With their help, my dad began to understand what recovery truly was, supporting yourself so that you can support others. Hopefully we can show those starting off their journeys that all it takes is the first step."

Kieran



Winter festivities



This year, we will be kicking off the festive season with an afternoon of fun at our Centre of Wellbeing. On **Friday 3rd December**, we will be switching on our Christmas lights, and would like to invite you to come along to help us celebrate. With **Santa's Grotto**, hot drinks and snacks, as well as some surprise animal guests, there will be something for all the family to enjoy.

Throughout the leadup to Christmas we will also be running some community activities that we'd love for you to get involved with, including a **Christmas Jumper Day on 9th December** where we will be encouraging everyone to snap and share a selfie in their best festive outfit (pets very

much encouraged). After much enthusiasm last year, we will be running another **stained-glass window activity**, and would love your help to decorate the windows of our Centre of Wellbeing this winter.

For more information on how to get involved in any of these events or activities, including requesting stained-glass window activity packs, send us an email at **Christmas@thistle.org.uk** or give us a call on **0131 661 3366**. We hope you can join us in some way!



See Life

Differently



We are currently offering a
£500
welcome payment
to anyone who
successfully secures a
job here at Thistle

We are lucky to have employees coming to Thistle from all kinds of backgrounds. Here, Gill shares her route to becoming a Personal Assistant (PA).

“With my family growing up, I had a few hours free each week and I wanted to do something a bit different. Thistle’s person-centred approach means that those receiving support choose who is going to work with them, so interviews can be different to what people have experienced elsewhere.”

PAs play an important part in the lives of the people they work alongside, so it makes sense for them to have some common interests. When I first met Peter, we

played pool in a pub! We now go to adapted cycling sessions, cafés and comedy gigs.

As a PA you spend a lot of one-to-one time with the person you support, and you really do get to know them very well. It’s hugely rewarding to help someone live the best life possible.”

We are keen to hear from people looking for roles for a few hours a week right up to full-time. For vacancies in our friendly teams in Edinburgh, Fife and the Lothians, visit thistle.org.uk/work-with-us

Getting out and about

Our assisted cycling sessions have been keeping our community active through the summer. Here, Bill shares what difference the group has made to him.

“The cycling sessions have helped in many ways. I fractured my leg earlier this summer and cycling was brilliant for strengthening and helping my physio. Not only has it helped me reach goals I’ve set myself physically, but it’s great seeing both carers and clients laughing and joking as they pedal together. I love the feeling of

freedom it gives me and meeting and greeting new people, saying hello as I pass on my cycles.

I used to cycle when I was younger, and it brings back those good memories every time I’m pedaling away. I enjoy the feeling of excitement it gives me, being speedy and seeing how far we can go together on our bike without turning back. It lifts my spirits and has given me confidence in myself. I have met good friends through it, and I hope to keep pedaling and meeting more on my journeys.”



Whether it's your first time ever on a bike, your first time in a few years or your first time since last week, why not come along, enjoy the outdoors and have some fun?

Find out more on
0131 661 3366.

Until our next newsletter you can keep up to date with all things Thistle by following us on our social media platforms.

www.thistle.org

 @thistlefoundation

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 @thistle_foundation

