



Guideposts

Here for You
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Guideposts Trust
A HISTORY

Although the way we deliver our work has changed over the years, the ethos and values remain the same.

All our work is focussed on helping people build on their strengths, maintain their independence, achieve their aspirations, develop supportive connections and prevent them from isolation and loneliness.

How It All Began

It all started when Raymond Cripps, a journalist and publisher for a small weekly newspaper in Witney, Oxfordshire, came across a story that intrigued him: three young men from Germany had travelled to Coventry to help rebuild the crypt in the Cathedral that their fathers had destroyed in WWII. Raymond hoped to write the story for his newspaper and thus went to Coventry to meet with them.

Raymond wanted this account of 'compassion in action' to get the readership it deserved. He had heard of a publication in America called Guideposts, which specialised in such stories. His article was published and he received a cheque and a subscription to the magazine. The magazine contained stories about people finding faith and using faith to help them through life's challenges and problems. Raymond began to wonder if the possibility of a British Guideposts magazine would be viable.

In summer 1965, Raymond shared his aspirations with Cliff Upex a local printer, and with the support of Guideposts USA, the magazine went into production. The Guideposts publications were unique. They were multi-faith, encouraged people to set aside their differences, to share their humanity and unite as one community. The ethos of inclusion and setting aside ones preconceptions formed the foundations on which our charity still runs today.

The magazine built a strong readership and received a number of letters every week pointing to the needs and problems people had.

One need that began to stand out, above all others was the need for community housing and care for people who were being unnecessarily confined to psychiatric hospitals and hospitals for those with learning disabilities. Cliff decided to investigate further and discovered that there were hundreds of people who could be discharged from hospital if such accommodations existed.

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Guideposts, Willow Tree House, Two Rivers, Station Lane
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Chairman Lydia Hirst • **CEO** Matt Jones

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Vision for Change: Guideposts Trust

Although the 1959 Care Act advocated care in the community, no such support provision existed. Over the coming years, Cliff Upex embarked on a mission to open conversations and the minds of healthcare professionals and MP's. Many opinions were shared but little support for the community housing concept was found. Cliff was determined that something needed to be done to address the vast numbers of people being held in hospital unnecessarily.

So, in 1972, he formed Guideposts Trust to help change this. The charity had a big vision, but sadly no money. Most of the work until that point had been done by Cliff on an entirely voluntary basis.

Around this time, Rev. Peale, founder of Guideposts USA (magazine) visited with his wife. They discussed the progress of the magazine with Raymond and Cliff, who shared the concept of supported housing for people trapped in hospital. They discussed how, as a British charity, they could raise funds for this but had no money to help the idea start and move forward.

Rev Peale immediately asked how much they needed to get started. However, at this point, the concept had not been fully costed and Cliff and Raymond could only give him a very rough figure. Rev Peale promised to send a cheque when he got home, which he did.

The figure proved to be far too small. However, it gave Cliff all the motivation he needed to commit more of his time to the charity.

Making the Vision a Reality

By the end of the first 12 months, Cliff had raised enough money to make the vision a reality.

The charity believed that those who had been in hospital for so much of their lives needed training to help them adjust to living in the outside world. When training had been given and appropriate accommodation was found, volunteer helpers were recruited to provide support and friendship. People could now be released from hospital to enjoy life in the community; being able to cope with daily tasks in a safe and supported environment.

These were the key objectives Guideposts Trust set out to achieve:

- Establish and provide support for homes, halfway houses, cluster flats and other such accommodation for those seeking rehabilitation in the community.



- Offer caring and befriending support for people who are now living in the community after years of being in hospital.
- Establish counselling centres for anyone facing mental health issues and/or at risk of being admitted into hospital.

Cliff set about the task of recruiting volunteers, working with hospital staff and organising training. He also had the idea to arrange for people, ready to transition from hospital, to come into small groups so that they could get to know each other and live together as friends.

By 1989, Guideposts Trust had 88 group homes, 18 staffed homes providing 200 bed spaces and 104 flats. At this time, the Housing Corporation had decided that the charitable work of the Trust needed to be separate from Guideposts Housing Association. This was a disappointing development for Guideposts taking away one of its core aims. Guideposts Housing Association then separated to later become Advance Housing.

From Housing to Community Based Support ...

Moving away from housing support prompted Guideposts Trust to rethink its approach entirely in the early 1990's.

Supporting people with mental health issues and learning disabilities to live well in their community would remain a central objective for the Charity; however Guideposts needed to find new ways to do this.

The big question was how, particularly when funding was, as is today, a critical requirement. This is when Guideposts Trust decided to appoint its first full-time fundraiser. In order to maintain the provision of training, care and counselling, Cliff came up with the idea of establishing community centres now referred to as hubs.

The first of our hubs was established in Watford, in support of people with complex mental health issues. Cliff Had found a house in the Centre of Watford which, thanks to the generous support of The Henry Smith Charity, was fully refurbished to welcome people throughout the day. In gratitude of this support, the hub was named Henry Smith House.

The opportunity arose to establish another hub, this time for people with learning disabilities, in the middle of a housing estate on Cross Street in Ware. Both hubs still exist today alongside others that have since been established in Witney, Stroud and Gloucester. Each hub offer a range of support, all reflecting and adapted to local need.

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...always striving to meet needs

Supporting people with dementia

At the same time as we started implementing our new community-based support approach for people with mental health and learning disabilities, Guideposts became aware of the many issues affecting people facing the challenges of **dementia** both in residential care and in the community.

The standards of nursing care were in great need of improvement to support the need of people with dementia living in nursing and/or residential care. To address this, Guideposts came up with the idea of Teaching Nursing Home and launched its largest appeal yet. The appeal was successful and the Charity was able to build a 30 Bed Home.

Aiming to be a national centre of excellence, Guideposts Teaching Nursing Home carried out research into care practices and provided training for doctors, nurses and care staff into the effects of dementia and how best to care for individuals with the disease. It also offered a wide range of sensory and therapeutic activities through the creation of a purposely designed sensory room, a sensory garden, and a Music Therapy Service. This work inspired the development of many of our services today.

Attached to the Home, was Guideposts Care Research Centre. The purpose of the research was to develop a model of care that could be replicable across care homes and domiciliary care providers. The project was funded by the Department of Health, and carried out in conjunction with the Institute of Public Care at Oxford Brookes University. Thirty care homes across England took part in the research, which resulted in the production of Guideposts Dementia Care Development Pack, a comprehensive audit, training and consultancy tool for care providers; the first of its kind in the country.

Based on this research, Guideposts established DISC, a specialist Dementia Information Service and helpline for Carers. DISC's main aim was to provide advice and information as well as link carers to relevant support services. The service evolved into a new, improved service called dementiaweb. in collaboration with other dementia support providers in Oxfordshire and other counties including Kent, Gloucestershire, Warwickshire. Dementia Web provided comprehensive information and support to a wider audience including people with dementia, their families and carers, professionals and members of the public. It also developed post diagnosis handy guides such as Hints and Tips for Carers and personalised local information. Although dementiaweb was phased out in 2014, Guideposts has continued to offer information, advice and guidance through our main information line, our contracted Dementia Oxfordshire service in partnership with Age UK and through our community based activities.

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Lunch, music, arts, gardening groups are just a few examples of what Guideposts has been running to give people with dementia and their carers the chance to take part and enjoy meaningful activities together.

Caring for carers

Providing help and support for the carers of the people we support, relatives and/or friends, has always been central to Guideposts' work.

Caring for a loved one can be very rewarding but also very challenging, and Guideposts has been working for many years to ensure carers access the support they need to cope through those challenges and help prevent them reaching crisis point.

From 2006 to 2017, we successfully delivered a Carers Support Service in Warwickshire where we offered information, advice and guidance for all carers, emotional support, facilitated the creation and running of hundreds of carers groups, fundraised for a carer hardship fund to support carers access equipment or support, as well as helped carers to get a break by ensuring that they had received a carers' assessment and that their need for respite was recognised.

Today we run a carers emergency scheme in Gloucestershire, organise a range of groups and clubs for carers to either take part in activities with the person they care for or on their own. We also organise groups for cared for giving carers a chance to take a short break from their responsibilities, rest, attend their own health appointment, meet with friend or catch up family. We also create opportunities for them to meet with people who are going through the same. This can mean so much, particularly during testing times, helping them to go through each day and making a very difficult and stressful time that little bit easier.

Children with disabilities and special educational needs and their families

Guideposts have developed and run a variety of support services for Children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) over the years.

Guideposts provided Fun Clubs (After school and Holiday groups) for SEN children and young people in Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire, Gloucestershire and West Berkshire between 2005-2014. These Clubs offered a wide range of leisure activities for children to enjoy positive social interaction, keep active and have fun. Activities allowed for children and young people to try new experiences in a safe and supported environment, develop their learning and skills as well as their confidence and self-esteem.

Today, we specialise in the provision of Forest School activities for SEN children who live in the most deprived areas of North and West Oxfordshire and give them a unique chance to enjoy the outdoors and the natural environment.

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Playing outdoors and exploring nature is a crucial part of childhood, whether that is through climbing trees, building dens, making mud pies, kicking leaves and collecting conkers, looking for insects or feeding birds, and vital to children's development. Unfortunately, this is something that children with additional needs and disabilities never or rarely experience.

They have significantly less support and face greater barriers to outdoor participation than children without disabilities; missing out on the many benefits the outdoor and interacting with nature can provide: fresh air, relaxation, physical activity, creative and sensory experiences, new learning and skills, making friends, independent and free play, and positive challenges.

Parents and/or carers regularly tell us of their struggles in trying to give their children a chance to play and enjoy the outdoors and the natural environment. They, themselves, don't feel confident in letting their children play outdoors, apprehensive of not knowing what to do and mostly anxious for their children's safety. They have limited access to mainstream projects; turned away because of their children's needs or unable to afford the costs. And, whilst some schools provide access to some outdoor and nature-based activities, provision is very patchy with many children missing out. Guideposts Forest School Project was established in 2014 to change this.

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