



# Newsletter Winter 2024



## Christmas thoughts...

For many people, there is something magical in the air around Christmas; people feel it and give expression to it in all sorts of ways. Christmas is often a time of goodwill, and in the midst of all the Christmas sparkle and the expectant hopes of the season, our hearts are often softened towards each other and our spirits warmed by the goodness of those around us.

Christmas is a season not only of rejoicing but also of reflection; a time to think about all that has passed; of friendships lost and gained; of those achievements, however small; and of things that could have gone a little better. Of people who are no longer amongst us; and of those less fortunate than ourselves. Indeed, Christmas involves having tenderness for the past; courage for the present; and hope for the future.

Here at the Foundation, we continue to push for a future for all ages. The events echoed throughout this Newsletter reflect the busyness of 2024 across all of our projects. The recent Ageing Summit provided the impetus for change and promoted further discussions around the Age Friendly Cities agenda. We look forward with great anticipation to working alongside other sector leaders and local policy makers to pick up the threads of previous work around this important arena and to forge ahead to ensure that our city is fully accessible to our aging community members.

Next year sees Stoke on Trent celebrating 100 years of City status, and we will enjoy working alongside the local Council, St Johns School in Penkhull, and others, in helping to capture the voices (young and older) to reflect on what has passed over the previous century, but equally important what our younger members see as important for their future.

Everyone at the BJF wishes you all the warmest of wishes throughout this festive season. The Christmas season is a time when celebration and togetherness take centre stage. We hope that you celebrate with loved ones, making good memories; embrace others who may not have many people to celebrate with, and welcome them into your hearts; and spare a thought for those less fortunate than us, at this festive time. Wishing you and your family health, happiness, and peace this Christmas and in the coming New Year. We look forward to seeing you all again in 2025.

**Sue Read, CEO**  
**Beth Johnson Foundation**

*Merry Christmas,  
Happy New Year*

## Reflecting on 2024

It's been another busy year at BJJ and often, our teams are so focussed on ensuring the best outcomes for our clients that time for reflection seems like a luxury. But as 2024 comes to a close and our plans for 2025 commence, we thought it would be good to encourage everyone to take a look back and think about the highlights and achievements of the year, and to share their favourite moments....

### Dotty and Friends!

During the time BJJ was involved in the [Creative Lives Project](#), there were many sessions of groups making polymer or pottery figures. I joined one group, not really thinking it was 'my thing,' and went on to make a small owl from polymer. She went into the oven to 'cook,' and I was amazed when she came out, she was so cute. I gave her to my granddaughter, who named her Dotty and loves it!



What for me, due to being so busy, felt like a bit of a chore, became something that I was immensely proud of, an achievement. It was brilliant joining in with people like our [volunteers](#), members and visitors, some I knew and others I got to know and had a great laugh with. I will not be so apprehensive about joining in again and I hope that you will too. Keep an eye on our [website events](#) page for hopefully more sessions like this in the the New Year. Or, if you would like to sign up as a Friend of BJJ, you can on the [website](#), just fill in the pop-up to receive more information about our activities.

**Angela Tunnicliffe,**  
**Office Manager BJJ**

### One year on



Well doesn't time fly! it is now 12 months since the PIER (Patient Information Education and Resource Centre) project moved to our temporary base at Bradwell Hospital. You can find us on the main corridor leading down to the rheumatology and physiotherapy departments, which have also been temporarily relocated from the Haywood to Bradwell Hospital.

Throughout our move, our service has remained as busy as ever. Our wonderful volunteers continue to support and signpost patients with arthritis, meeting with many people that really benefit from chatting with someone who can empathise with their situation.

We are now looking to increase our number of volunteers so If you would like to join our friendly team for a few hours a week, please contact June on 01782 652734 or email [june.brammar@mpft.nhs.uk](mailto:june.brammar@mpft.nhs.uk).

**June Brammer,**  
**Community Liaison Manager**



Patient Information Education  
and Resource Centre

## A taste of the Caribbean

No two days are the same when you are a Dementia Advocate, and my role brings many surprises. I recently visited a client who lives in a care home, and after finishing the work we needed to do together, the client insisted that I stay and spend some time with her at the Caribbean Event that was being held at the care home for all the residents and staff. I was more than happy to oblige!

I had a lovely time with my client and her friends; the music was great and the energy was so upbeat, it had a real party feel about it. The food was absolutely delicious and there was so much of it that we decided it would be rude not to have second (and third!) helpings. There was a lot of laughter and wished I could have stayed for longer...

I left feeling very uplifted and grateful to my client for inviting me to such a fun party.



**Jackie Murray, Dementia Advocate**

## A truly holistic approach

I've worked with some wonderful clients over the last year. One memory that stands out for me is working with someone who had a strong desire to share his experience of living with dementia, to raise awareness and show the world that it is possible to continue live well with a diagnosis.

He had heard about a training programme which is designed to help the healthcare professionals of the future be more aware of dementia and was keen to be involved. But unfortunately, the geographical location of the programme meant he was unable to join in. I was able to investigate ways to make this wish a reality, and supported the client to access [BJF's digital inclusion](#) project meaning he is now able to join the programme using video conferencing software.



He has also gone on to link with other people who are living well with dementia through the [BJF Dementia Advocacy Peer Support Group](#), and his journey really evidences the way that the services at BJF come together to provide holistic support for our clients. The feedback we received from the referrer after working alongside the client was lovely to hear, **"I just want to give thanks for the amazing support that you provide to people affected by dementia and the support that you provide to our service!"**

**Clare Dawson, Dementia Advocate**

The BJF has been providing **free** independent advocacy for people with dementia in Stoke and North Staffordshire since 1998, supporting people to have their voice heard by others; taking their side and helping them to get their point across.

Do You Know Someone with Dementia? To find out about how our dementia advocacy service could help them take a look out our [website](#) or download our service [leaflet](#).

## Making a difference for people living with loss

There have been so many positive moments working with the [Bereavement Friendship](#) clients this year, and it's wonderful to hear people's feedback about how our support has helped them. One memory that stands out for me is talking with a client who felt she had reached a point where she no longer needed to attend group support sessions but chose to return to us after a 6-month gap when she was struggling. **"I realised I wasn't bouncing back this time and straight away I knew what I needed. I knew that the only place I felt safe to talk about what I was going through was here, I need to be heard by people who get it – it was the biggest help for me before, it kept me going. And being back here, knowing that I have a place where I belong, and feeling so welcomed – it's already helped. I feel so lucky to have found you all"**.

We have also had some fabulous recognition from our referral partners and representatives of the communities we serve, and I was delighted to be invited to attend the [Biddulph Volunteer Recognition Awards](#) event where our Biddulph Bereavement Friendship Group was recognised for offering vital support for the local bereaved community and presented with a Biddulph Town Council Civic Award!



**Amanda Carter, Project Co-ordinator**

## A huge thank you to our Volunteers!

Our Volunteers generously give their time to help us to provide much needed support in our community. In 2024 the volunteers have continued to provide admin and project support, helped older people to get to grips with digital technology, were involved in organising community events and helped to raise awareness about living with dementia. It has been wonderful to look back on everything they have achieved throughout 2024 and the brilliant feedback we receive for them really does highlight how much our team are valued by our community members.



**"The volunteers at BJB are wonderful, so kind, caring and friendly. They greet you with a smile and are very welcoming. It is wonderful to see the volunteers, some of whom have been helped by BJB and have decided to help others by becoming volunteers themselves, they are so willing to help others. They carry on the ethos of BJB of caring for the older community. Thank you to them all."** Community Member

We recently celebrated Older Person's Day together with our volunteers, reflecting on the many contributions they make every day in our community. **"We have knowledge and wisdom...we have life experiences and forgotten skills. Older people are full of history. In fact, we are history"** BJB Volunteers.

A huge thank you to all our [volunteers](#), for supporting the BJB and making a difference every day in our community!



**Patsy Corcoran, Volunteer Development Manager**