

# Case study

## Tackling Isolation

### Chichester



*The AUKWSBH centre in Bognor Regis is a social and activity hub for older people locally.*

AUKWSBH encourages older people to volunteer at all its centres as it can be incredibly fulfilling and can help to give many older people purpose during retirement.

- ✓ Less lonely, more connected
- ✓ Active and involved
- ✓ Wider service support
- ✓ More confident and resilient

\*ALL NAMES HAVE BEEN CHANGED

# Jane\* – restoring purpose and improving mental health

## Issues/challenges faced:

Jane is in her sixties and at 16 was diagnosed with anorexia and later, severe depression. She has been in and out of hospital throughout her life, mainly when her weight became dangerously low. She is 6 foot 2 and weighs just 47kg. Following early retirement her anxiety and depression got worse and she went downhill rapidly. Jane, from Chichester heard about the AUKWSBH Centre in Bognor through a friend that works there and decided to pop in and say hello.

## Support given:

- After her initial visit to the centre, Jane was encouraged to come back the following week, but unfortunately she was admitted to hospital again due to her weight. She returned weeks later, explaining she felt so low because she wasn't needed, wasn't useful, and had no purpose.
- Jane was too frail to attend classes or move around too much but it was suggested she volunteer, working on the café till which had a new pricing structure. It was framed as a favour to the charity and Jane agreed to get involved.
- Making the journey a few times a week from Chichester, to volunteer on the till has been a great tonic for Jane. She loved it, enjoying both the work, but mainly the camaraderie and banter. She has remained in this role for the last 3 years.

## Outcome

During her time working in the kitchen, she has had to go back into hospital just once. The effect on her mental health and confidence is staggering. It is clear she loves her job, she knows she is instrumental in the seamless running of the kitchen and is the first to volunteer for evening and weekend events. She has never missed a day's work, she is loved by other volunteers and members alike and is often seen helping out members with crosswords or spellings for letter writing. Although her weight gain will never be significant she has stabilised. **Her doctor took the time to call and say "well....I don't know what you are doing to her....but keep on doing it."**

Her structure and routine has not only helped her physical wellbeing but connecting with others in the community had helped her mental health and sense of belonging as Jane now feels worthy and has a sense of belonging.