



St. George's Patient Forum Newsletter

Connecting Patients, Empowering Lives

December 2025

Health awareness days/weeks/month: Key dates for December		Inside this issue
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5th International Volunteer Day	12th Festival of Winter Walks	

Rushcliffe Social Prescribing Hub

Rushcliffe Social Prescribing Community Hub Nominated for Health and Wellbeing Project of the Year Award

The Rushcliffe Social Prescribing Community Hub has been nominated for Health and Wellbeing Project of the Year Award, recognising the incredible impact it has had on local residents since opening its doors. The nomination reflects not only the work of the Social Prescribing team, but also the dedication of the many people who take part in sessions each week.

A huge thank you goes to everyone who took the time to vote, share their experiences, and tell their stories. Your voices are the reason the Hub received this nomination, and your honesty helps show just how valuable community-based wellbeing support can be.

The Hub has become a warm, welcoming space where people come together to improve their confidence, build healthier routines, and find connection through creativity, movement, mindfulness, and shared experience. From yoga and Qi Gong to art, cooking, and lifestyle workshops, every session is shaped by the needs of the community — and the nomination is a reminder of what we can achieve when we work together.

As we look ahead to next year, we want to ensure the Hub remains sustainable so we can continue delivering high-quality sessions for local residents. From **January, we will be introducing a small fee towards** sessions

to help keep the programme running. This contribution will allow us to maintain the variety and standard of activities while continuing to support as many people as possible.

Thank you again to everyone who has supported the Hub so far. This nomination belongs to all of you.

🔗 Find out more: www.rushcliffehealth.org/sp-hub

Facebook: facebook.com/RushcliffeSP

✉ Email: nnicb-nn.rushcliffesocialprescribing@nhs.net

Keep an eye out for updates and book your place at future events here:

🔗 www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/rushcliffe-social-prescribing-service-108969547441

Or explore the full Friendship Calendar at:

🔗 www.rushcliffehealth.org/friendship-calendars

Here's to more laughter, friendship, and wellbeing in the months ahead!

To be added to our mailing list for future updates or to express your interest in getting involved, email us at:

✉ nnicb-nn.rushcliffesocialprescribing@nhs.net

Thank you Meg Kozian (Social Prescribing Link Worker) and our congratulations for being nominated

Medical Insights: National Grief Awareness Week

National Grief Awareness Week 2025: Making Space for Healing

Grief has a way of catching you off guard. It sweeps in, reshapes your days, and changes the way you move through the world. And yet, it's treated like something you should "manage" quietly, quickly, and out of sight. **National Grief Awareness Week (2nd–8th December 2025)** exists to challenge that silence.

Today, we'll explore why the week matters, what this year's theme – growing with grief - means for you, how grief affects workplaces more than many people realise, and the genuine, heartfelt ways teams can support each other.

Why Recognising Grief Awareness Matters

In the UK, around one in ten adults is grieving at any given time. It isn't only bereavement that reshapes someone's emotional world. Breakups, estrangement, miscarriage, identity shifts, and major life changes can leave you just as shaken.

People can suffer in silence. they heal better, work better, and feel less alone when it is recognised.

"Growing with Grief": What It Really Means

"Growing with Grief" is an invitation, not an instruction. It asks you to stop treating grief like a chapter you're supposed to finish and instead recognise it as something that moves with you. Growth here doesn't mean cheerfulness or "looking on the bright side." It means allowing your life to expand around the loss, not in spite of it.

Maybe you've felt it yourself: how a breakup forces you to redefine who you are, or how losing someone close changes the way you value time, relationships, or boundaries. Growth shows up quietly. In deeper compassion, in clearer priorities, and in the courage to ask for help.

This theme reminds you that **you're not failing if you're still grieving**. You're adapting, reshaping, and learning to carry something heavy with more steadiness than before. And you deserve the space, inside and outside of work, to do that at your own pace.

What Grief Can Look Like

Grief is often spoken about in hushed tones, as if it only belongs to people who've lost a loved one. But you know this already: grief has many faces. It appears when a relationship ends, when a long-held dream falls apart, when you become distant from family, when illness reshapes who you thought you were, or when a job you loved suddenly disappears.

Loss is loss.

Your nervous system doesn't distinguish between the "acceptable" kinds and the ones society tries to minimise.

Practical Ways to Support Each Other Without Overstepping

[Supporting someone through grief](#) is about meeting people where they are. Here's what meaningful support can look like:

- **Create flexible expectations that adapt over time:** Grief fluctuates. Someone may cope well today and feel overwhelmed tomorrow. Let the person guide what they can realistically manage.
- **Check in gently and consistently:** Support shouldn't fade after the first week. A simple "How's today feeling for you?" can go a long way.
- **Let them set the tone of conversations:** Some people want to talk; others don't. By giving them control, you offer safety rather than pressure.
- **Avoid rushed positivity:** "Stay strong" or "You'll be fine" can feel dismissive. Curiosity lands better than reassurance: *"What would help right now?"*
- **Offer low-pressure ways to take care of themselves:** Quiet rooms, reflective breaks, or reduced meeting loads. These small adjustments make a big difference.
- **Respect boundaries without withdrawing support:** If someone wants space, give it, but don't disappear. Grief often feels lonely enough as it is.
- **Listen without fixing:** People usually don't need solutions. They need presence. A warm silence can be more healing than the most polished advice.
- **Encourage professional help thoughtfully:** A gentle "If you ever want extra support, I can help you explore what's available" opens the door without pushing.

This is what "Growing with Grief" looks like in practice: not asking people to move on, but making sure they don't have to move through it alone.

Thank you to PMAC. Further information can be found via info@pmac.uk

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Medical Insights (2): Sensible Weight Control at Holiday Time

One of the easiest ways to gain weight and become generally unhealthy is to eat too much stuff that has a high Glycaemic Index (GI). Don't be put off by the term – it's really simple. It just means that food with a high GI raises the sugar in your blood too quickly – this leads to a high level of insulin being released all at once, which has a bad effect on your body. Those foods with a low GI raise the blood sugar levels more slowly so you can control how much insulin your body releases and prevent the body from responding negatively (avoiding an inflammatory response which **makes your body store the excess energy as fat instead of burning it off**). Of course getting regular exercise helps too. Your doctor can refer you to a good dietician if you want to lose weight sensibly.

Here is a list of LOW GI foods (energy lasts – blood sugar levels stay steady - good!) followed by a list of HIGH GI foods (energy rockets then plummets too low, not good).

LOW GI

You can include these in each meal to keep your blood sugar level even and your immune system healthy but keep portions sizes reasonable and substitute low fat for full fat when possible.

- Roast and salted peanuts, other nuts raw or roast (These are really low and nuts are incredibly nutritious in a range of ways)
- Low fat yogurt unsweetened or with sweetener, fruit yogurt. Kefir for gut health.
- Fruit e.g. cherries, grapefruit, dried apricots, apples, pears, peaches, oranges, green grapes, banana, Red lentils, lentil soup
- Whole milk, skimmed milk
- Butter beans, chick peas, peas, baked beans in tomato sauce
- Wholemeal pasta & noodles, macaroni, brown rice
- Canned or home-made tomato soup
- Unsweetened apple juice or orange juice (not too much!)
- All bran
- Carrots boiled
- Dark chocolate 85% (yes!), crisps (yes!) but in small portions
- Steel cut porridge oats
- Stoneground wholemeal bread
- Special K,
- Sweet corn

MEDIUM GI Go easy on these.

- Muesli, shredded wheat, Weetabix
- Sultanas, raisins
- Pitta bread, cheese & tomato pizza, rye bread, croissant, Ryvita, crumpet, wholemeal bread
- Basmati rice, couscous
- Honey
- Digestive biscuit, shortbread biscuit

- Ice cream
- Potatoes (better in their jackets)
- Canned fruit in syrup (you can get it in juice), fresh pineapple, cantaloupe melon

HIGH GI

Cutting these out and replacing with low GI foods can help you lose weight. Also combining smaller portions with a low GI food will lower its GI value e.g. jacket potato with baked beans. (This is also a high folate food)

- Mashed potato, French fries
- White bread, bagels, baguettes
- Watermelon
- Swede, parsnip, butternut
- Bran flakes, Cheerios, Coco pops, corn flakes, puffed wheat
- Sweets cakes and biscuits
- Rice cakes, Rice Crispies and ---- Top of the list comes WHITE RICE!

Thanks to Chrissie Wells for this article

Meet the Forum Member – David Bray – A Life Shaped by Caring

Meet the Forum Member – David Bray - A Life Shaped by Caring



I recently discussed with another member of the St Georges Patient Forum what I should include in a blog about myself, be it my professional legal background, upbringing or why I had come to live in West Bridgford. We settled on caring for a family member and in my case my late wife Carole.

Both Carole and I were born and raised in London, and we married in April 1984. Despite many episodes of trips and falls over the years, Carole was only diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis in 2000, at the age of 54. MS affects many aspects of a person's life, and Carole faced each stage of her illness with remarkable determination. My initial role was a supportive one: accompanying her to hospital appointments; recognising the difficult symptom days; and bringing her a morning drink in bed. We both continued to work, socialise and enjoy holidays to France.

We bought our flat in Nottingham in 2020 with the initial plan to have somewhere to stay for the weekends to visit our daughter, son in law and 2 grandsons who were settled up here. However, with the isolation of COVID and the impact this had on both our working lives, and the increasing deterioration in Carole's mobility, this soon became a permanent move. We joined St George's and Carole had her care transferred to a neurologist at Queens Medical Centre (QMC). We had additional invaluable support from the neurorehabilitation therapy team with both physiotherapy and occupational therapy input. Equipment gradually increased: shower stool; grab rails; a wheelchair as an alternative to the rollator, although Carole hated me using it in case I tipped her out; bed handles to help Carole get out of bed; and we organised a home alarm with Rushcliffe Borough Council. Although daily routines became more demanding, what mattered most was preserving the life we shared: cooking together, welcoming family visiting from London (and round the corner!), and maintaining the independence Carole valued so deeply. Both Carole and I were continually impressed at the efficiency and care provided at St George's: we have never struggled to arrange an appointment; medications are regularly reviewed with input from the practice pharmacist; and appropriate additional reviews from eg the social prescriber helped ensure elements such as the blue badge and attendance allowance were up to date and in place. At times Carole suggested that we might consider a residential care home for the two of us but since I was still able to care for her, and wanted to, we discounted that idea and instead arranged for morning carers to support Carole get washed and dressed each day.

Then on 1st April 2024 Carole had one of her falls but this time it was different. This led to an admission to City Hospital where we learnt that she had a previously undiagnosed heart condition which would be life limiting. For my part I mastered the parking at City Hospital and visited Carole daily for the 10 weeks she was in hospital. Her discharge home was challenging, thankfully our daughter's understanding of the various systems enabled us to

get the relevant care and support back in place, and my carer role increased to preparing every meal, managing all the food shopping and ensuring she wasn't alone for any prolonged periods of time. Our daughter would visit at least weekly to put all Carole's medications into a dosette box and set alarms on 'Alexa' to prompt when these needed to be taken. Concerned that Carole was struggling with a sense of loneliness and isolation now she was unable to independently leave the flat, and that I might need some respite, our daughter arranged for Carole to attend Nottinghamshire Hospice Day Therapy once a week. This brought Carole a lot of pleasure seeing the beautiful gardens, joining crafting activities and speaking with the supportive team. After a 'funny do' on one visit, a matron was appointed to visit our home and planned to continue to offer input. However, on 21st April 2025, I woke to find Carole unconscious at the side of the bed. St George's continued their support even after death by providing the necessary paperwork as promptly as possible, which allowed us to hold Carole's funeral on a beautiful sunny day on what would have been our 41st wedding anniversary.

In conclusion I learned that you care if you love the person for whom you are caring. You value the good times that you have had with your partner and for us it was high on 41 years with plenty of events – both work (the first 18 months of our partnership were taken up with Carole getting permission by the then Director Public Prosecutions to help me defend seven of the eight defendants in what became known as the Cyprus Secrets Case) and at home watching our five grandchildren grow and thrive. Carole supported me in a number of ways and I for her likewise. You become buddies. We would never have been happy in a care /nursing home so long as we had the strength to manage. Did we bicker? Yes, occasionally but nothing serious. I would recommend any couple to manage together provided that they care for one another. I have many happy memories.

Have your say on Home Care in Nottinghamshire

We're gathering voices now to help shape care support in the community for the years ahead.

At Nottinghamshire County council we are working on improving home care for people.


We'd love to hear from you if you receive support in your own home, or if you're a family member or carer of someone who does

- What you like (or don't like) about it
- What could be better?
- What does good care and support look like to you?

This is an early listening phase. We are gathering insights and feedback about your experience.

How to Take Part:

 Survey / contact form - [Click here](#)

 Phone: 0115 804 2378

 Email: ourvoice@nottscc.gov.uk

 Group visits available

We'll share back what we heard before moving forward. This engagement runs until June 2026.



**Nottinghamshire
County Council**

Walk Everywhere: Exploring the Grantham Canal from Bassingfield to Cotgrave Country Park

Grantham Canal Walk continued – Bassingfield to Cotgrave Country Park

The next stage of the walk along the Grantham Canal continues from Bassingfield, following the towpath eastwards towards Cotgrave Country Park. This section maintains the gentle, rural character of the earlier route but introduces more visible remnants of the canal's industrial past, including several disused locks and old canal structures.



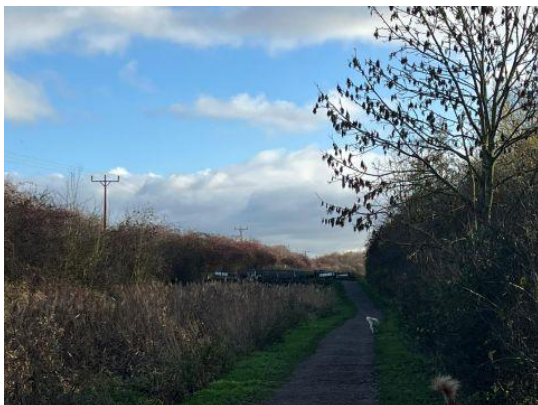
The walk begins just beyond Bassingfield, where the canal remains straight and calm, bordered by hedgerows and open farmland. The towpath here was firm underfoot, with only occasional softer patches following recent rainfall. Birdlife was still active despite the late-autumn conditions. Several swans and moorhens were seen along the water, and flocks of long-tailed tits and finches moved between the hedgerows. These quieter seasonal sightings added to the calm and reflective atmosphere of this part of the walk.

As the route progressed, the landscape gradually unfolded into wider, more open fields. This part of the canal includes several disused locks. Although no longer operational, they provide a striking reminder of the canal's 18th-century engineering and the once-busy trade route between Grantham and Nottingham.

Approaching Cotgrave, the towpath became more varied, stretches of woodland and views across the restored open spaces of Cotgrave Country Park. The canal curves gently and the waterway is shaded by willows, making this part of walk particularly attractive. The transition from canal towpath wide paths of the country park marked a clear shift in scenery, with ponds, grassland, and accessible walking branching off in several directions.

The walk concluded within the country park, where benches open spaces provided an ideal spot for a rest. Overall, the Bassingfield to Cotgrave section offered a peaceful and engaging route, combining natural beauty with points of historical interest.

It serves as a reminder of how the Grantham Canal has evolved into an important local green corridor, providing space for wildlife and a safe, pleasant route for walkers.



Thank you to Claire Bicknell for this 'Walk Everywhere: Exploring the Grantham Canal from 'Bassingfield to Cotgrave Country park' article and photographs



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and

Recycling Medical Waste

Recycling News:

Did you know – you can recycle your medicine and vitamin blister packs?

It's easy to recycle your pill and blister packs at a range of High Street pharmacies. This includes our local Boots on Central Avenue, West Bridgford

Blister packs contain aluminium and plastic which are both recyclable. You can register for an app and register what you recycle and gain points. Or you can simply recycle them.

Boots send them to a company which separates and extracts the aluminium which is great recycling. It also makes the plastic into a useable form. They state that nothing goes into landfill or incineration.

Thanks to Margaret Johnson for researching this latest information.

Ask the Doctor

Doctor, doctor, can I have second opinion?

'Certainly. Come back tomorrow!'

Thank you to Dr Matthew Jelpke for this 'Doctor, Doctor' joke.

These jokes must be contagious because here is Claire's very own Doctor, Doctor joke:

**Doctor, Doctor, they've dropped me from the cricket team - they call me butterfingers
Don't worry, what you have is not catching**

Coming up in January:

- 1-30th Dry January
- 3rd Festival of Sleep Day;
- 19-25th Cervical Cancer Prevention Week;
- 30th Parent Mental Health Day

All views expressed in the Newsletter are personal and correct to the best of our knowledge. If you are worried or concerned about any of the issues raised, please see a medical professional. Hyperlinks and QR codes provided are linked to professional websites and societies who offer advice and help. It is of course up to you to decide whether to use them.

Editor: Phil Unsworth