

TillyTattle

Spring 2022

In this issue:

ABERDEEN COMMUNITY
ENERGY

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

CLIMATE WEEK NORTH EAST

www.shmu.org.uk/press

Photo credit - Morven Bush

Spring Edition 2022

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Welcome to your Spring edition of the Tilly Tattle.

In this issue we have articles covering the renovations at Muggers Bridge, Aberdeen Community Energy's fifth birthday and news around other developments in the area, including Jacobs Ladder, new housing and the new primary school.

If you would like to get involved and join the editorial team or if you have ideas for the community publication, you can easily get in touch with us. The staff at **shmu** are able to support and train anyone living in the area who are interested in developing their ideas and skills in either writing, photography or proof reading. So please don't be shy, this is your magazine written, edited and designed by the good folk of Tillydrone.

If you live in the Tillydrone area and would like to come along to the editorial meetings or submit an article then get in touch with **Laura** at **shmu** on **0752586312** or you can email her on laura.young@shmu.org.uk.

You can also view this magazine alongside previous editions on the **shmu** website www.shmu.org.uk then click the '**PRESS**' option.

Our dates for the next edition have not been set yet but keep an eye out on the Tilly Tattle Facebook page for more information coming very soon!

Tilly Tattle is a community publication and the views expressed are not necessarily those of the editorial team or of shmu.

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Zebra Crossing upgrades set for Hayton Road in late Spring 2022

Councillor Ross Grant

For a long time, road safety for our residents has been a key local priority for residents in the area. That is why a lot of work was done to engage with the community regarding improvement measures to try to reduce speeding on Hayton Road. Having met with council officers on a number of occasions, I have long been an advocate of upgrading the existing zebra crossings on Hayton Road which have long been a concern to local people.

That is why I am delighted that, following meetings with council officers, they agreed to include a proposal in the small scale traffic measures in Autumn 2021. The proposals will involve introducing six-metre-long raised tables at the existing zebra crossing points.

These measures will supplement the recently approved mandatory 20mph which is to be introduced into the area, and also the enhanced zebra crossing beacons due to be implemented as part of the current years Cycling, Walking and Safer Routes budget. The proposed raised tables will be in the form of a flat-topped road hump 75mm in height, with ramps 1.125m in length at a gradient of 1:15, with a plateau of 6m in length.

These will serve an important dual purpose in ensuring that local residents are given priority when seeking to cross the road at these locations but it will also compel would be speeding vehicles to reduce their speed and therefore reduce the risk of any form of accident which I very much hope will be welcomed by the

residents and Riverbank School community.

It has gone through the statutory consultation processes in November and to full public consultation in December and I can advise that no objections were received. Final detailed design is now being progressed before arrangements are made for the upgrades to be planned appropriately and carried out later in Spring 2022. These improvements will, alongside other road safety measures in the area, hopefully lead to improvements in road safety and a reduction in speeding and I will continue to press for further improvements to be made.

If you have ongoing road safety concerns, please do email me at rossgrant@aberdeencity.gov.uk

Scotland's Census

This year is the census year for Scotland. It should have been 2021 but it was postponed because of Covid.

The census is the official count of person and household information in Scotland, and it is important to fill out the census as the government and councils use the information from it to plan public services and how to spend their budget, so they need accurate information.

2022 is the first predominantly digital census but there is the option to fill out a paper census if you would prefer.

The census date is the 20th March 2022 and you can get more information about the process on www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk.



New Developments in Tillydrone

Work has started on the new Riverbank School building and there was a sod-cutting ceremony to mark the start of the work on the 6th December 2021.

The new school is due for completion in summer 2023

It is being built just off Tillydrone Avenue, partly on the site of the old St Machar Primary.

The new school will increase local primary school provision and offer 100 new early learning and childcare places for local families.

The council are also working on building 70 new council homes in Tillydrone.

The site will be a mixture of houses and flats and all will be built to the Gold Standard for construction which means the homes will be greener and cheaper to run, enhanced space standards and more natural light.



Artistic impression of the concept for the underpass entrance from Hayton Road



Mugger's Bridge Update

Over the last few years there has been talk in the Tillydrone community about improvements that need to be made to Mugger's Bridge.

In November 2021 the bridge was shut for 10 weeks in order for these improvements to be made. This included better visibility, the installation of mirrors, improved lighting and upgrading the condition of the steps.

However, 10 weeks later and Tillydrone residents were disappointed to see that minimal changes had been made after the closure.

It transpired that the work could not be completed in one go because of delays in materials arriving so the council team decided to reopen the bridge for

the community to use until they could restart the work.

Two of the major issues with Muggers Bridge had been addressed with the drainage issues and the surfacing of the path and the steps being fixed, and the walls had been painted but residents were unimpressed by the lack of communication between council officers and the community.

One of the local councillors for the community, Councillor Ross Grant chased up the issue with council officers and the community council received an update confirming that installation of lighting and panels to the underpass will take place in early 2022.



Blueberry Wellness - PT Programme

At the start of a new year, our health and fitness resolutions are at their highest, though fast forward a few months and they tend to have fallen by the wayside.

However, Laura Walker of Blueberry Wellness is here to change that for the residents of Tillydrone.

Laura is a qualified personal trainer with 25 years of experience in the industry and is launching a social enterprise supporting local people who would like to learn about health, fitness wellbeing and becoming a personal trainer.

The project will be based out of the Tillydrone Community Flat and though it is in its early stages at the moment, Laura is recruiting for the first set of participants at the moment.

The idea is that Laura would provide training to these participants who would then be available to offer training sessions to other residents in the area by autumn this year.

Laura came up with the idea for the project in a conversation with a friend just before the start of the Covid pandemic.

Fast forward a year and she has received start-up funding from Firstport's Social Entrepreneur Build It fund to make it a reality.

Laura said: *"Over Covid my fitness business kind of fell apart with how much free exercise was out there. The people I was trying to reach just weren't hearing me, so I got offered another job and that was that."*

However, her enthusiasm for this idea hadn't disappeared so she spoke to some of her colleagues and recruited two board members.

She continued: *"The idea behind the project is to empower people to self-manage their health. As well as being an education and well-being programme, it will also deliver employment opportunities at the end of the educational aspect."*

"The whole point of personal training is that it's meant to be personal to the participant. You need to focus on their health and their likes but also be relevant to their lifestyle in order to make sustainable changes."

Laura told the Tilly Tattle that she picked to run the project in the Tillydrone community as when she started engaging with local residents, they really got behind the project and said they were keen to see it happen.

If you are interested in signing up or finding out more than email Laura on fitness@laurawalkerlimited.co.uk

Defibrillators

In recent years defibrillators have become an increasingly common site in publicly accessible places.

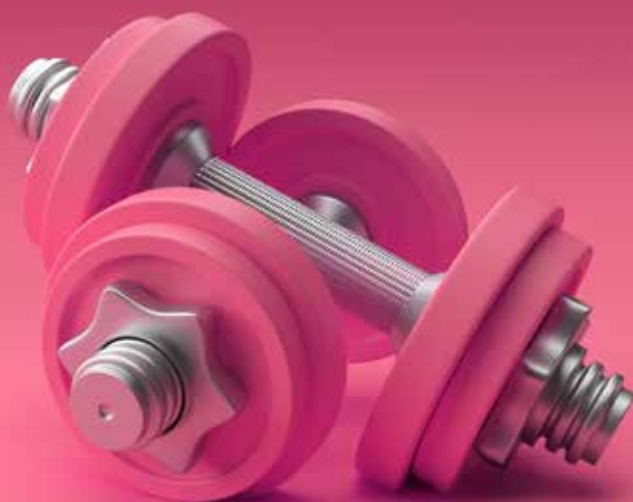
A defibrillator will assess the heart rhythm of someone who is in cardiac arrest and if needed it can be used to shock the person's heart back into a normal rhythm.

You don't need to be trained to use a defibrillator and there are clear instructions on how to attach the defibrillator pads and use the machine.

Would you know what to do if you found someone in cardiac arrest?

If you come across someone who is unconscious, unresponsive, AND not breathing normally they may be in cardiac arrest. The most important thing to do here is to call 999, talk to the operator and they will advise you what to do. When you call 999 the operator will tell you if there is a defibrillator nearby.

The site will be a mixture of houses and flats and all will be built to the Gold Standard for construction which means the homes will be greener and cheaper to run, enhanced space standards and more natural light.





MAKING A DIFFERENCE THROUGH THE REAL LIVING WAGE

We know employment should free people from the grip of poverty, however, the reality is that for many workers, being employed does not guarantee financial security. In-work poverty is increasing, with many in the city unable to meet their everyday needs despite having a job.

It's estimated that one in five children in Aberdeen are living in poverty, with a large proportion of those in families where at least one parent is working, highlighting the impact of low pay.

But what can be done?

Increasing hourly wage rates for workers is an effective means of delivering extra cash directly into the pockets of low paid workers. The real Living Wage cannot solve in-work poverty on its own – but it is an effective tool – and the movement to increase the number of employers paying the real Living Wage is taking off in Aberdeen.

Through the Aberdeen Prospers Group of Community Planning Aberdeen, partners have announced their intention make Aberdeen a Living Wage Place - delivering a plan to increase the number of real Living Wage employers, subsequently winning pay rises for workers to help tackle issues around poverty that headlines about Aberdeen's economy can hide. But on a day-to-day level – what difference can the real Living Wage make?

If workers on the current UK government minimum wage were lifted onto the real Living Wage of £9.90 an

hour, on average, they would benefit from a pay rise of hundreds of pounds a year.

It can mean people have extra wages to meet everyday needs like weekly shopping, and requirements like clothing for children – whilst relieving some of the stress and pressures caused by low income. It's good for businesses too. Employers who pay the real Living Wage can become accredited, gaining recognition for tackling low pay. Accredited employers have also reported a boost in company reputation, enhanced productivity, and a motivated and loyal workforce – reducing staff turnover and saving on long term training costs. It can help economic recovery– the Smith Institute highlighted if just 25% of Scotland's low earners had their pay raised to the real Living Wage, the subsequent increase in wages and spending could deliver a £89m boost to Scotland's economy, including £3m to Aberdeen.

As we rebuild following Covid, we must ensure those on low pay are not left behind.

In future editions we'll update on progress and the difference the real Living Wage is making to workers and families in Aberdeen.

If you are an employer and want to learn more about how the real Living Wage can boost your business, please contact Living Wage Scotland at accreditation@povertyalliance.org

Instant Neighbour Supporting the local community

Happy New Year from all of us at Instant Neighbour! We hope that you all had a lovely Christmas and New Year and managed to stay safe and healthy. We opened our doors for 2022 at our St Machar Drive HQ on the 5th of January and are full of enthusiasm for the coming year. Looking back, 2021 saw the message to 'shop local to support local' emphasised across all sectors; retail in particular as small businesses targeted local communities to help keep them trading. Charities have been crying out for volunteers and donations as increasing numbers of people have found themselves in need of support. We really appreciate the support from the local community both in AB24 and further afield from the wider Aberdeen community. We

love catching up on your news when you pop into the shop to pick up a bargain and are eternally grateful to those of you who pop in with cakes and treats to keep us going. A huge thank-you to you all for your ongoing support and custom as well as your donations of items for reuse encouraging sustainability and helping AB24 go One Step Greener.

We're in the middle of implementing as many changes as possible to ensure that as a charity, we're as green as we can possibly be. Our shops sell reuse items which are often one-off unique products. Every time you shop with us, upcycling these items, you're not only potentially getting better quality items for less money, but you're being kind to the planet by diverting that item from landfill.

We're a local charity and we're here to support the local community. The profits generated by selling reuse items in our shops are ploughed straight back into the charity to support our charitable enterprises - our Giving Tree, and our Food Bank. In monetary terms, every £20 spent in our shops equates to the cost of a basic food parcel. In December 2021, through the Instant Neighbour Giving Tree Christmas appeal and the gifts we received both from profits generated in the shop and from donations by the wider Aberdeen community, 3684 children were supported and received gifts to open on Christmas Day. Our Food Bank is open Monday – Friday all year, but in December, our food bank handed out 595 food parcels.

The Lighthouse Community

The Campus Food Store, in partnership with Trussell Trust and CFINE, operates on a Monday 1pm-2-30pm and Thursday 1pm -2-30pm within the Community Campus.

Average attendance at the Food Store is around 110 people a month which comprises mainly of Lighthouse users, ethnic minorities, people in construction and catering who have lost their jobs due to Covid, people on low income, people experiencing homelessness and those who find themselves in that unfortunate place of sofa surfing (which has increased recently).

The Food Store continues to provide a variety of food stuffs, toiletries, nappies sizes 1-6, detergent and washing powder and when necessary, vouchers.

The council run a food larder on a Wednesday from the Campus, which largely consists of fresh/frozen food and vegetables. The food larder Facebook page has around 120 followers. The two food outlets, food store and larder, offer different things on different days and complement each other very well. The partnership between the Lighthouse, Trussell Trust, CFINE and the Council has been in operation since before, and through the COVID crisis. As a result, the Campus has become a significant food distribution centre for the area and hundreds have greatly benefited from this regular and diverse resource. We greatly appreciate all the partnerships and generous contributions from churches and business that have helped to provide and sustain food

supplies to the neediest through this difficult time.

If you need assistance, emergency food parcels are available, please call **07885 466792/ 01224 489546** between 12 noon and 1pm on a Monday and Thursday and arrangements will be made to help you.

Note: Due to Covid restrictions the Lighthouse office in the Tillydrone Campus remains closed but support workers are still available. It is hoped, as the Covid restrictions are eased the Lighthouse office, groups and projects will be able to resume soon. Regular updates will be posted on our Lighthouse website and Facebook page. **www.lighthouse-abdn.org.uk www.facebook.com/lighthouseAberdeen**



DONSIDER COMMUNITY HYDRO LATEST NEWS!

It is over 5 years now since our hydro began turning and producing clean, green, renewable energy down on the River Don, next to Donside Village.

On 21st September 2016, the turbine was switched on and over recent months we have reached several milestones, including celebrating our 5th birthday and producing 2 million kWh on 17th October 2021.

Going straight to the National Grid, the electricity is exported to 'green energy companies' who sell it to those of you who have subscribed to green energy tariffs.

If you have taken a walk down to the hydro lately, you will have noticed that instead of an uneven and slightly dangerous rocky gully between the gate and the turbine house door, there is now a lovely flat piece of grass covered land. This was done with the help of a group of amazing volunteers, who hand filled a number of gabion baskets (those 'rock filled cages you often see next to roads) over a period of 3 days. With the assistance of our trusty builder, Gary, whose digger moved a number of massive boulders, the team of volunteers created a safe way to access the turbine house. They also built up the side of the lade (the man-made channel that allows water to flow under the turbine house

and over the Archimedes Screw, making it turn, and create electricity), improving our flood defences. We then covered this newly flat area with earth and planted grass seeds. We have really enjoyed watching the grass grow and cover the area in green. As there are some wildflowers seeds in the mix, we are hoping for a lovely show of flowers in late spring early summer.

This essential work has made the access to the turbine house much safer for all, and we are delighted.

Volunteers have continued to offer essential support on a sometimes-daily basis, cleaning the otter screen of debris, branches, and logs, and carrying out maintenance work at the hydro site. We cannot thank them enough, these lovely people are essential to the good running of our scheme!

We are also delighted to announce that the foot bridge across the lade to the island is now open to the public. This is a lovely space to walk in and from the man-made hill you can get an elevated view of the river and of Tilly (if you dig a long deep hole to make a lade, you have to put all the earth somewhere, so we created our very own hill!).

All that we ask is that people respect the area, take only photographs, and leave only footprints when they have

a walk on Hydro Hill. It is there for all to enjoy.

A note of interest is that there are over 1,500 trees and shrubs planted on the island, every single one planted by a volunteer.

Lastly, you may have noticed the wee 'cairn' at the side of the bridge. It is 'empty' at the moment, but this space will hold an information panel, which will tell you all about the history of the area surrounding the hydro. It is part of a series of 9 cairns, situated all along the river, each one telling the story of the immediate area it is situated in and showing a walking route between them all. Community groups along the route have all contributed to the wording and the images shown, and we are just waiting for the information panels to be installed on the cairns.

It will then make for a lovely walk along the river, from Donmouth, through Seaton Park, along the Boardwalk to Donside Village and the Hydro and then heading West to Grandholm, Woodside and almost reaching Persley. Watch this space!

If you would like to know more about the hydro, please visit our fb page <https://www.facebook.com/ACEnergy2016>



LET'S GO FOR A WALK!



Info:

Walk name:	Donside Walk
Start Point:	Persley Walled Garden (car parking available)
Walk Type:	Linear
Distance:	Around 2.5 miles return
Public Transport:	Hutcheon Low Drive
Difficulty:	Suitable for beginners with no steep sections
Accessibility:	Suitable for beginners, with some gradients and uneven surfacing

Review:

This is an interesting and relaxing walk which takes in part of the Donside Heritage Trail with all its' industrial history and pretty riverside views. I started this walk from North Anderson Drive, but the walk can be started from the Persley Walled Garden (car parking available).

As you walk down to the walled garden, it's definitely worth taking a peek inside to admire this beautifully landscaped Victorian garden. You won't be disappointed!

From here take the sign for the River Don Path and you will soon see Persley Castle (now a nursing home) coming into view on the upper path and some interesting old industrial equipment from the old Grandholm Mill on the lower path. The path follows the riverside and takes in some lovely views, and some great nature! I walked along to the Jacobs Ladder steps (now closed) and returned the same way.



Climate Week North East

18th -27th March 2022

Come and be inspired by the incredible actions your own community is taking to live sustainably!

A packed 10 days of events throughout the North East showcasing how people are pulling together and taking real steps to combat climate change within our area. If you would like to make a change but don't know where to start come along! The events are fun, there is something for everyone, providing knowledge and inspiration to take small (and big) steps in the fight against climate change.

Right on your doorstep and online are green family fun days, tips to make your home warmer and bills cheaper, how to grow your own veg, wild meadows and orchards, upcycling, movie nights and even a Tesla that likes to wag to hard rock! Best of all everything is absolutely free!

The full list of events will be available here –
www.climateweeknortheast.org/events

There are events across the whole of the City and Shire with over 70 events, there is something for everyone. There are a few events taking place locally as part of Climate Week North East.

Donside Community Hydro tour
Saturday 19th March 11am-12.30pm

Organiser: Aberdeen Community Energy

Location: Donside Village, Tillydrone

Visit Scotland's first community urban hydro scheme. Find out how a community built a hydro and how this multi-award winning scheme came into being.

Cost and booking: Booking essential via <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/donside-community-hydro-tour-aberdeen-community-energy-tickets-244573274247>

Upcycling workshop and Gardening session Sunday 20th March 11am-2pm

Organiser: The Secret Garden Society

Location: The Secret Garden, (next to the Butchart exam centre on University Road), University of Aberdeen

An upcycling workshop in the garden in which we bring milk/juice containers and create nurseries with them and plant some seeds for participants to take home. Afterwards we will do some gardening activities.

Cost and booking: FREE

Realising Food Waste Wednesday 23rd March EVENING tbc

Organiser: The Secret Garden Society

Location: The Secret Garden (University Road, AB24 3UT Aberdeen), University of Aberdeen lecture theatre or online.

Talk about food waste and sustainability with Aberdeen University lecturer Margaret Gill.

Cost & booking: FREE No booking required if online. For in-person attendance please contact **secret.garden@ausa.org.uk**

Movie Night Saturday 26th March
Saturday 26th March 6pm/7pm-9:30pm to be confirmed

Organiser: The Secret Garden Society

Location: University of Aberdeen lecture theatre or online (Netflix Party)

Event description: Documentary night with discussion afterwards. Cost & booking: For more details and to book contact **secret.garden@ausa.org.uk**

Supported and promoted by the newly formed NESCAN, North East of Scotland Climate Action Network Hub. NESCAN Hub aims to be an information, education and collaboration hub for organisations within Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire that are working on projects that reduce carbon or increase biodiversity to build the capacity and skills of those organisations and support members and the local community to deal with climate change, biodiversity loss and help develop sustainable thriving communities.



Jacob's Ladder Progress

We have been given some funds from Aberdeen University Community Fund for equipment for clearing and cleaning the stairs and the paths but unfortunately, we cannot ask for volunteers quite yet as we do not have public liability insurance. The office bearers will continue to do this work on a voluntary basis as we do at the moment.

We are very grateful to have been given litter pickers, gloves, bin bags, and fluorescent jackets, from Lorna Graham, a Development Officer within Aberdeen City Council.

We have applied to the Common Good Fund for money to have a comprehensive survey report on the stairs carried out to determine whether it is viable to have them repaired or replaced. This will consist of extensive tests being carried out on the integrity of the stairs and the possible costs involved to bring them back into public use. We should know if we have been successful in our bid sometime in March.

Meanwhile, we have set up a basic survey to determine the strength of feelings the community has to having the stairs restored and we would urge readers to complete the survey as it will help us with future funding applications. You can reach the survey via the website -

www.jacobsladderrestoration.com



Mitchell's Hospital

ALAN JOHNSTONE

Mitchell's Hospital in the Chanonry, Old Aberdeen, was founded by the philanthropist David Mitchell and opened on 25th January 1802.

The wording of the conditions of endowment said that the hospital was built "with a regard for the inhabitants of the city of Old Aberdeen and its ancient college and a desire in these severe times to provide lodging, maintenance and clothing for a few aged relicks and maiden daughters of decayed gentlemen merchants or trade burgesses of the said city." The word "hospital" in this case had a different meaning to that used today – it referred to a place of hospitality, similar to a care home, rather than for clinical use.

David Mitchell studied at Aberdeen University but little is known of him for almost fifty years after that. It seems his profession was stockbroking, with an interest in insurance and shipping. He had a comfortable life as a gentleman batchelor and, with no offspring to leave his inheritance to, he founded the hospital as well as providing six studentships at Marischal College. Although he was unknown in Aberdeen his generosity was gratefully accepted by the Principal of King's College, Dr Roderick McLeod, who contacted the Merchant Society, the Magistrates and the Trades Council so seek their

support. This was duly given for the establishment of an "Auld Maid's Hospital", with the residents to be five aged relicks and five maiden daughters of the gentlemen referred to above.

A Deed of Mortification was drawn up in 1801, which contained very specific clauses. The building was to be known for all time as Mitchell's Hospital and eligibility for residence, what the residents were to wear and what type of food was to be provided were laid out in some detail. The ladies had to be virtuous and of good moral character, of the names of Mitchell or Forbes (his mother's maiden name) in equal numbers. The residents had to wear gowns of a deep blue colour, leading to them being referred to as "auld maids in blue gowns". Management of the hospital, admission, qualification, behaviour and diet were very specifically detailed, along with the appointment of a governess or matron and a Board of Trustees. The building's design was in the shape of a letter H, with a central refectory for breakfast.

The Trustees were drawn from King's College, the Church of Old Machar, Aberdeen Town Council and the Trades Council. Nine women were admitted in January 1802, with two rejected because they could not

provide proof of their husbands' links to the Incorporated Trades.

The state of one of those accepted underlined the real need for the hospital – "she came over from the new town in a cart, she being unable to walk on account of the poor state of her health".

David Mitchell died in London in 1803 and his immediate family became involved in the hospital's organisation. His nephew Alexander provided a large hand bell and a clock to alert residents at mealtimes and when the doors were locked for the night. His sister Mary insisted that a long wooden bench be provided in Old Machar Church for the ladies to occupy on Sundays. Horn beakers with silver rims were given to the hospital to be used by the auld maids, the Governors, Matron and visitors during Founder's Day celebrations each 31st December.

Mitchells' Hospital was renovated in 1924 and 1965 and is now a category A listed building converted into self-contained flats for elderly ladies.

Black & white photo accredited to The Silver City Vault



Making Recovery Visible



Our first Making Recovery Visible music course was a great success which finished just before Christmas. The small group of four came together to share their experiences and stories of their recovery journey and the stigma that is attached. These discussions formed the basis of their song and working with Iona and Sarah they produced 'Fight the Stigma'. At the end of the course, they performed this song and 'Country Roads' to a small audience who were in the building that day. All participants had also taken part in learning some instruments with keyboard, guitar and tabletop drums all being played.

Feedback from the course has been great with everyone increasing their confidence and an improvement in their mental health/wellbeing. One participant commented 'It has really helped me to build my confidence, rediscover my musical interests and I want to stay involved with shmu to continue that'

Our courses restarted mid- January with Iona back to run another music course and Ayesha based at The Credo Centre with a Podcasting group. Both courses have been well attended and we are excited to see what they create!

Youth Media

The Youth Media Team have been working with a researcher from University of Aberdeen called Beatriz and have previously completed two science-based podcasts. For the third and final podcast the team have produced a creative story which has underlying themes about clinical trials but scripted in an accessible way that makes it easier to understand without all the scientific jargon that is often used. The team have collaborated well and shared ideas effectively and have now scripted and recorded their podcast which will be shared online for the public.

Two more young people have now completed their National 3 media courses. Many of the Youth Media Team members are on track to receive certificates soon for their volunteering hours including one young person from our summer programme who has recently received their 50-hour volunteering certificate.

Youth Media member, Molly (who is from the Northfield area) has successfully been offered a volunteering role at Aberdeen Science Centre where she will be engaging with the public during clubs and workshops. For the last few years Molly has been presenting a weekly science themed radio show. Molly said: "I don't think I would like science if I hadn't done the science show"

FIBROMYALGIA

Fi-bro-my-al-gia?

I have suffered from this nasty problem for close to six years now and I was recently asked what it is, people know I have got it, but they do not really know what it is. When I thought about it neither did I, I had always just accepted what the professionals told me, it is chronic, incurable, and extremely unpredictable.

It causes pain which can be mild to extreme, it can affect specific areas or be widespread. There may be a trigger or maybe not, the onset of flare ups can be gradual or rapid. It can cause the sufferer digestive and bowel problems. Often there will be memory and speech issues, "Fibro Fog." A lack of balance, dizziness and clumsiness is common and my personal favourites, sensitivity to things like light, noise, and temperature. Oh, and do not forget the difficulty sleeping. There will be good days and most certainly bad days. One thing is certain though, it is random, unpredictable and to the observer it is often invisible and that in itself can be a disability.

Fibromyalgia is a strange beastie, there are between 1.5 to 2 million diagnosed sufferers in the UK alone, yet little has been achieved in relation to a cure. The current approach is simply to treat the symptoms. As the most common symptom is pain

that is often the focus of the medics when faced with a sufferer. Sadly, over the counter pain relief is seldom effective and that leads to the use of prescription pain relief, usually opiate based in the form of morphine. Now I am not going into the stigma often associated with regular opiate use, that is just another branch on the tree that sufferers must deal with. For many it is the only way to find relief from the constant 24/7 pain as well as dealing with potential side effects from medication, indeed it is not unusual for the side effects to require mediation.

It is hardly surprising that sufferers often suffer from crippling mental health issues, experiencing pain twenty-four hours a day often with little or no relief. Facing the inability to perform simple daily tasks from opening a coffee jar to dealing with personal hygiene. Everything is a challenge and the reliance on others for support is fraught with issues. Then you hear seemingly innocent comments like "well you don't look disabled" or "it can't be that bad, you look fine to me." But we are not fine and facing the additional challenge of having an invisible disability is often a step too far for sufferers

Another often forgotten aspect of dealing with disability is the role of the carers. Often untrained and unpaid

spouses or family members. These largely unsung heroes often suffer both physical and psychological problems from performing their support roles. Physical from having to perform tasks that would normally be undertaken by two paid carers, bathing for instance, lifting and physically supporting sufferers. On top of these massive tasks and providing emotional support they must deal with the pain of watching their loved ones suffer. Oh yes and then they might find time to work and have a life of their own. Not a great job description is it.

It has been said that we often "look but do not see and listen but do not hear." Now that may be true but sometimes there is nothing to see or hear, when that happens we must rely on that rarest of senses, our common sense. Try to see what is not obvious and not judge when we do not know the facts, an ounce of compassion is a wonderful thing, use it wisely.

Support group contact info:

Fibromyalgia Action UK
Suite 3006, Mile End, 12 Seedhill
Road, Paisley PA1 1JS

Tel: 0300 999 3333

(national helpline)

web: www.fmauk.org

email: charity@fmauk.org

Community Contacts

Aberdeen City Council Helpline - 0800 0304 713

ALCOHOL

Alcoholics Anonymous - 0800 9177 650

Drinkline - 0300 123 1110

CRIME

Crimestoppers - 0800 555 111

DRUGS

Alcohol and Drugs Action Helpline

01224 594700 or 07927192706

Narcotics Anonymous

0300 999 1212

DENTIST

Emergency - G-Dens - 111

DOCTORS

NHS 24 Emergency - 111

POLICE

Non-Emergency - 101

ELECTRICITY

If you have a power-cut - 105

GAS

Gas Emergency - 0800 111 999

WATER

Scottish Water Emergency - 0800 0778 778

HOUSING

Emergency Repairs - 03000 200 292

Family Planning - 0345 337 9900

Mental Health Aberdeen - 01224 573892

Breathing Space - 0800 838 587

Samaritans - Need to talk

01224 574 488 or 116 123

SOCIAL WORK

Adult Protection - 0800 731 5520

Joint Child Protection Team

01224 306877 or 0800 731 5520

Aberdeen Carers Support Service - 01224 914036

Age Scotland - 0800 1244 222

CFINE 01224 596156

Financial Advice at CFINE 01224 531386

Pathways 01224 682 939

Citizens Advice 01224 586255

St Machar Credit Union 01224 276994

Oldmachar Medical Practice

0345-337-0510

Old Aberdeen Medical Practice

01224 486702

Tillydrone Clinic

01224 276723

Tillydrone Library

01224 489539

Woodside Medical Group

01224 492828

DOMESTIC ABUSE SUPPORT

Domestic Abuse is not acceptable. It is not your fault and you are not alone. Domestic Abuse is when you are hurt, bullied or frightened by:

Your husband or wife. Your boyfriend or girlfriend

Your current or ex-partner

Their behaviour can be; controlling, physical, sexual, financial or emotional.

Help and support

There are services available to support you, and they are still open. You do not have to wait for an emergency to get help. Tell someone you trust or contact:

National Domestic Abuse Helpline Free and confidential advice. Open to all. 24 hours a day. Telephone: 0800 027 1234. Website: sdafmh.org.uk

Grampian Women's Aid

Telephone: 01224 593381. Website: grampian-womens-aid.com

Rape Crisis Grampian Telephone: 01224 590932. Website: rapecrisisgrampian.co.uk

LGBT Domestic Abuse Helpline

Telephone: 0300 999 5428 or email info@galop.org.uk

Men's Advice Line

Telephone: 0808 801 0327