

# Providence Row GAZETTE

• COMMUNITY MAGAZINE •

## AWARENESS

Hoorah! It's **VOLUNTEERS WEEK** and our issue is dedicated to all the people who give their time and skills to Providence Row. We profile some of them in the following pages but many more work in the background raising funds, sponsoring colleagues and friends, giving their expertise and advice when called upon. We acknowledge and thank them all.

Managing the whole operation is Nadia, our volunteering development manager. Our chat with her reveals her knack for putting volunteers' talents to best use at Providence Row. Peer mentors, student mentors, kitchen and garden volunteers and the Gazette team have all found new strengths as a result of Nadia's input.

Some of our volunteers have written to us about their pleasure in volunteering. It seems that volunteering is double edged with benefits for those we help and our own enjoyment an unexpected bonus.

Student interns from King's College University of London are playing an increasingly important role in Providence Row's work. Student Natasha was recently awarded a top degree after completing her research at Providence Row. Hannah spoke to her about her work. A true ambassador.

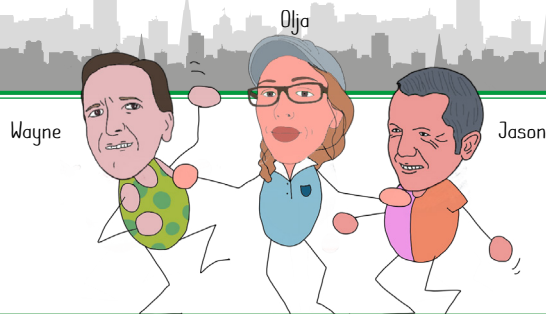
Who would have thought that broken legs hold the key to volunteering? Liam traces the medical history of fractured femurs to the start of human civilisation and our awareness of others needing help.

Away from legs, Sam has turned from brain teasers to jokes. Guess which we'll be telling to our pals.

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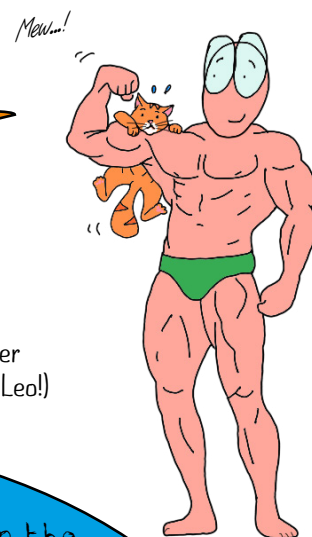
# CELEBRATING VOLUNTEERS AND PEERS!



**Volunteers' Week (June 1st - 7th) is a time to say thanks for the contribution millions of people make across the UK through volunteering. Here are a few quotes from some of the Providence Row volunteers!**

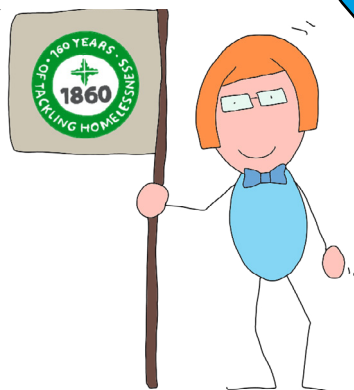
Being part of the Music Group at PR was a very beautiful experience. We used to dance, sing and hang out all together, as a family. You could tell the clients were really having fun and that meant everything. Music, good company and fun times. What else?!

By volunteer  
Sam (& Leo!)

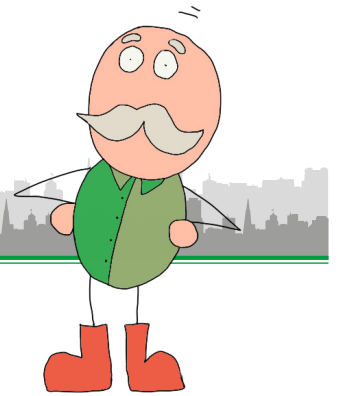


I've been volunteering at Providence Row for several years mostly in the Dellow Centre's Welcome Area. During the last year however, while the day centre has been closed, I've been contributing to the Providence Row Gazette, a new venture started by volunteer manager Nadia. I made many marvellous friends during my time in the day centre. To be honest, I didn't value the importance of face to face relationships until such an everyday activity was no longer possible. When we can finally meet people again, I hope I will treat everyone as having great rarity value.

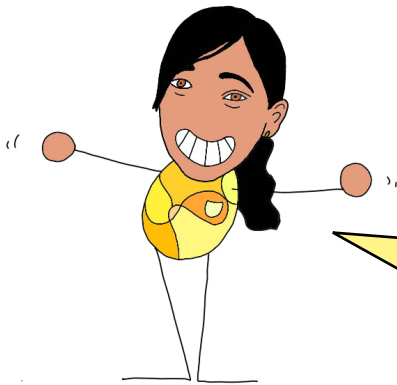
By volunteer  
Frances!



"I STARTED VOLUNTEERING AT PROVIDENCE ROW AFTER A FRIEND OF MINE TOLD ME ABOUT THEM. GETTING INVOLVED IN SUCH A FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT SURROUNDED BY THE WARM FEELING OF BEING ABLE TO DO A LITTLE BIT FOR SOMEONE ELSE, IMMEDIATELY BROUGHT CALM TO MY CHAOTIC LIFE, AND GAVE ME THE OPPORTUNITY OF GIVING SOMETHING BACK. CAN'T WAIT TO BE BACK TO THE DELLOW!"



*By volunteer Manolo!*

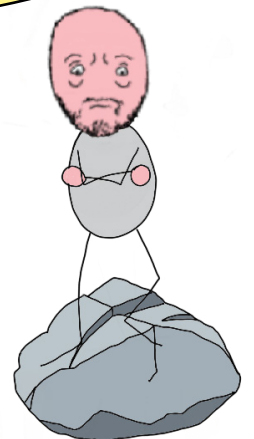


Discovering Providence Row and the incredible work it does in my neighbourhood has had a huge impact on my life. Over the past six years I've had the opportunity to be involved in so many different activities within the charity. I've learnt a lot from each experience and hope that in some small way I have been able to help shape the journeys of some of those clients along the way.

**By volunteer Hannah!**

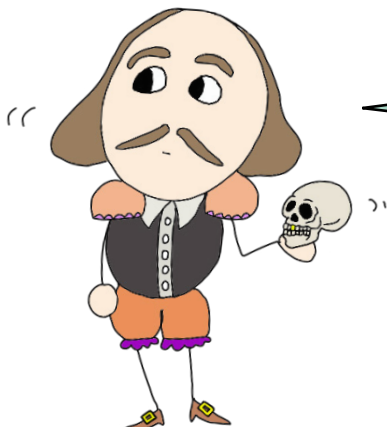
**Volunteering at PR helped me understand that homelessness is more about circumstance than choice.**

**Helping others helped me better understand myself.**



**By volunteer Liam**

**By volunteer Shespir**



**TO VOLUNTEER, OR NOT TO VOLUNTEER? IF THAT IS THE QUESTION, THE ANSWER IS YES, TO VOLUNTEER.**

**THERE IS NOT A BEST WAY TO HELP OTHERS THAN BEING IN A GOOD PLACE AND SHARING THAT STRENGTH WITH SOMEBODY ELSE, HELPING THEM GET STRONGER. HOW INCREDIBLY REWARDING IS TO FEEL THAT YOU CAN DO A BIT FOR SOMEONE.**

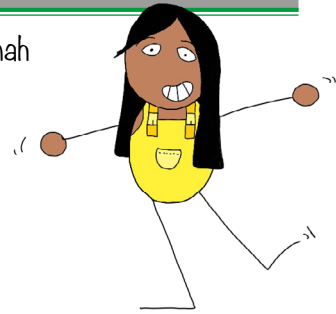
**I WOULD HONESTLY QUIT MY JOB BEFORE QUITTING VOLUNTEERING...**

# INTERVIEW WITH NATASHA

## Interning at Providence Row: Natasha's Experience

By volunteer Hannah

Providence Row has an established partnership with King's College London with many students volunteering as interns with us over the years. Natasha studies Global Health & Social Medicine and interned in 2019 as part of her undergraduate degree, subsequently carrying out her dissertation research on health and homelessness. Volunteer Hannah speaks to Natasha about her experience and research findings.



### How did you hear about Providence Row?

I discovered Providence Row at Kings Civic Leadership Academy where students are chosen to work directly with charities. I was matched during an interview session a bit like speed dating, I spoke to [Providence Row staff] Nadia and Anna and they took me on.



### How did you find your 9-month placement?

It was brilliant - an opportunity to understand the holistic nature of supporting clients. For the first month I worked primarily in reception along with another intern. I was exposed to various parts of the organisation, we had the opportunity to cook in the kitchen, to garden, meet Tom O'Connor (CEO), patrol with needle exchange - the varied experience was stimulating, each day was different which suits my personality. I was able to talk with the Advice and Support team, homeopathy, massage therapy, talking to clients on a day to day basis, I found that human element amazing.

You can read about homelessness, you can study it but if you don't get the chance to see it first hand, you don't understand how it plays out differently for each individual.

### What were the challenges of the role?

I was trained to triage and interview clients. When you hear clients' stories, there's a yearning to do all I could to help, you meet clients at a critical crisis moment, that emotional turmoil pulls at your heartstrings - I had to have the humility to recognise the limitations of what I could do as a student, to recognise how I fitted in as part of a team, that was humbling. I realised that even if I helped in a marginal way, it was worthwhile.

### What was most rewarding about your placement?

Getting to know everyone, the staff, the clients, them getting to know me, learning names, hearing their stories, building rapport, seeing how all the components work together, that collaboration.

### What is your course?

Global Health and Social Medicine. We often look at health on a big scale, people typically think of healthcare which is an important aspect but we also need to think about the social determinants, what within society influences health outcomes, socio-economic factors, where you live - when someone comes into the hospital there are a host of reasons why someone presents with a particular issue, often due to their environment. It ties into the situation we're living in now - it's quite ironic I'm doing a degree in global health during a global health crisis.



*Natasha interned at Providence Row in 2019*

**In layperson's terms, what is your dissertation about?**

To be put it simply, when you think about promoting health we think about healthcare which is important; it's the 'hardware', hospitals, nurses, doctors but I wanted to capture the 'software', the importance of relationships, social support, relationships between clients and staff, additionally I wanted to look at how self-care is applied in the relationship - is someone able to recognise their own needs, especially frontline workers who face unique pressures.

**How did you carry out your research?**

I'd planned to interview in person but when Covid-19 happened I switched to video conferencing frontline staff in the Advice and Support Team who were still working during the pandemic, I wanted to capture how that relationship changed given the need for social distancing and with the day centre being closed.

**What were your key research findings?**

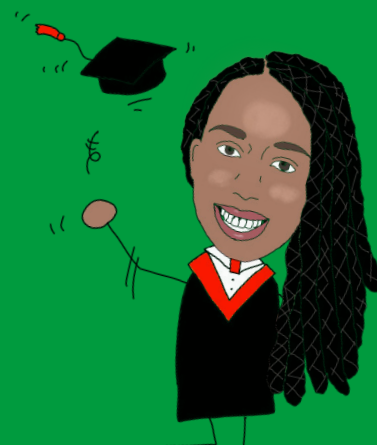
Trust is the foundation of the client-worker relationship. Each relationship has different ways of building trust. Some people might use humour to bridge gaps, or perhaps give the client more agency or confidence to say how they want the situation to be handled.

Most of all it's about treating clients as human beings - often the way people experiencing homelessness are treated in society denies someone the opportunity to be treated with dignity. Once you establish trust you can support someone - helping them visit their GP, as they move into housing, as someone seeks support with substance misuse.

I looked at how the relationship changed during the pandemic, when staff work on the phone they need to change their tone since you no longer have body language clues. I saw that self-care for frontline staff is so important, an integral part of the relationship. With emotional fatigue and compassion fatigue, you need to look after yourself.

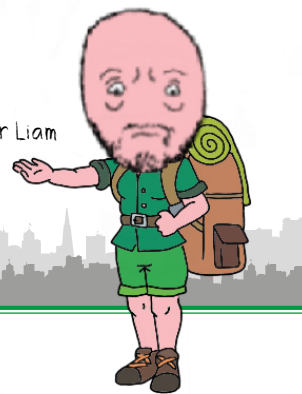
**Congratulations on achieving a first in your dissertation! What are your plans for the future?**

I'm looking into further study, I am considering a Masters. I'd definitely like to continue working in healthcare.



# CIVILISATION AND AWARENESS ARE FIRST COUSINS

By volunteer Liam



Years ago, Margaret Mead, a famous US anthropologist and teacher, was asked by a student what she considered to be the first and best evidence of civilisation within an ancient culture.

The student expected Mead to talk about the use of fishhooks, or perhaps the crafting of innovative hand tools or indeed, detailed cave paintings, but Mead did not. Contrarily, she said that the first sign of civilisation was recovery from a break to a major long leg bone, that is, the thigh (femur) or lower leg (tibia and or fibula).

Mead explained that in the animal kingdom, if you break your leg, effectively you die. You cannot run from danger, get water to drink or hunt for food. Furthermore, you are easy prey for prowling beasts. Generally speaking, she maintained, it would be unlikely for an animal to survive and recover, unaided, from a broken leg.

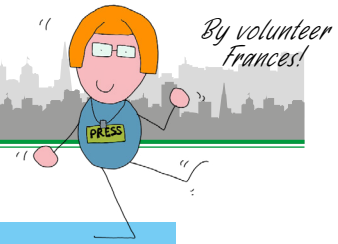
The fact that a broken leg had healed is evidence that someone had co-operated with and cared for the injured party, maybe carried that person to a place of safety, perhaps bound the wound, and looked after and fed them whilst their body healed and they recovered.

Helping someone else through injury or difficulty is where civilisation starts, Mead said.

**We are all of us at our best when we serve and help others in our communities.**

# VOLUNTEERS WEEK

## Interview with Nadia



As volunteering development manager at Providence Row, Nadia believes that the East London homelessness charity could not survive without its committed and talented volunteers. She says National Volunteers' week is an opportunity to thank them for their many contributions.

**'Volunteers give their valuable experiences and skills to the organisation,'** Nadia says. **'Obviously, volunteers are unpaid, so they also increase the organisation's capacity and capabilities enabling us to develop in ways that may otherwise be out of reach.'**

With their richly diverse backgrounds, skills and experiences, volunteers bring a sense of inclusiveness to clients, believes Nadia. **'Staff and volunteers alike are motivated by the scandal of homelessness and we are all committed to helping people affected by it.'** she says. **'And of course, volunteers are impressive ambassadors and advocates for our charity's work.'**

## VOLUNTEERS AT PROVIDENCE ROW

Providence Row's volunteers fall into three groups (community volunteers, intern students and peer mentors) all of whom are Nadia's responsibility.

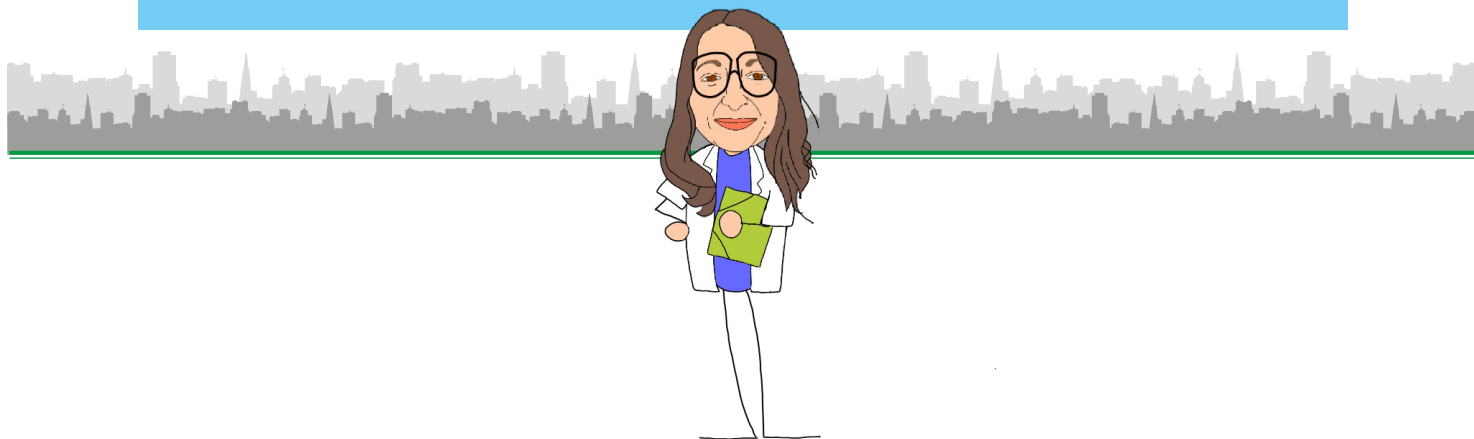
For now, community volunteers are mainly working in the food project and rooftop garden growing and preparing meals for Tower Hamlet's temporarily housed rough sleepers. A further group has been producing the recently launched Providence Row Gazette.

Three student interns are currently volunteering with the charity through a partnership with King's College, University of London. King's College civic leadership academy develops students' leadership abilities through charity placements and mentoring.

**'Providence Row was selected as a King's College partner because of the charity's values of inclusiveness and social awareness',** says Nadia. **'We are so proud that star King's student Natasha recently graduated with top marks for her assignment undertaken during her placement at Providence Row.'** (See page 4 for Natasha's story).

Peer mentors in the third group act as supporters for other clients while strengthening their own qualities. Having established the peer mentorship development programme some years ago, Nadia is proud of its success. **'This programme is very important,'** she says. **'Peer mentors have lived through homelessness, substance misuse and mental health issues and have struggled in their lives. But now they can say "I'm here, I can inspire others,"** showing that change is possible.'

Nadia believes that all volunteers have a sense of social justice and want to truly help people facing difficulties in their lives. **‘Compassion is a catalyst for all of us paid or unpaid,’** she says. **‘Some of us are at a fortunate time in our lives and want to help others.’**



Nadia came to London after studying in Italy. **‘London was the place to be then but I was taken aback by the number of people missing out on its prosperity’** Nadia remembers. **‘My family gave me a sense of social responsibility and a belief that we can help each other by combined effort.’**

## **A WORD FROM PROVIDENCE ROW CHIEF EXECUTIVE TOM O’CONNOR**

**‘ VOLUNTEERING IS AT THE HEART OF OUR COMMUNITY. VOLUNTEERS BRING WONDERFUL COMMITMENT AND COMPASSION TO OUR ORGANISATION AND MANY SKILLS AND EXPERIENCES. CLIENTS OFTEN TELL ME THAT VOLUNTEERS REINFORCE THEIR DIGNITY AND VALUE ON THEIR JOURNEY TO RECOVERY. THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS!’**

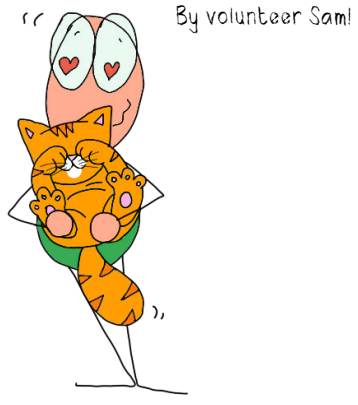
### **Volunteers’ Week runs from 1-7 June each year**

Around 30 volunteers are contributing to Providence Row, mostly in the food project and garden while others are peer mentors, student interns and the Providence Row Gazette team. Most of the UK’s 165,000 voluntary organisations rely heavily on volunteers, contributing around £18 billion to the economy. This week is a chance to thank the 20 million people who volunteer at least once in the year.

*Sources: Providence Row and NCVO*

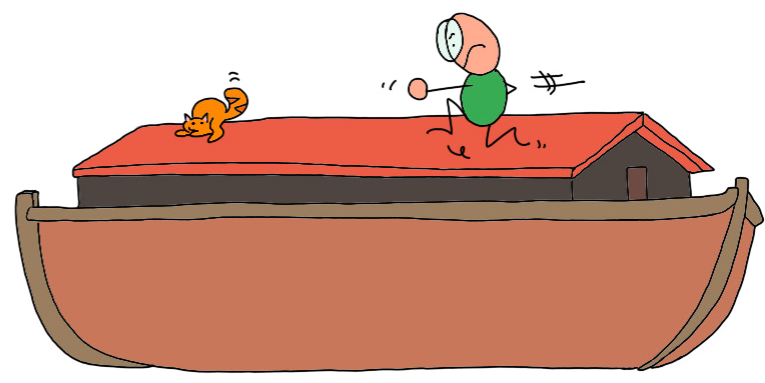


# ART AND FUN



IF IT WAS UP TO ME, FEBRUARY WOULD INCLUDE BOTH VOLUN-TINES DAY AND VALEN-TEERS DAY

"DON'T EVER QUESTION THE VALUE OF VOLUNTEERS. NOAH'S ARK WAS BUILT BY VOLUNTEERS; THE TITANIC WAS BUILT BY PROFESSIONALS"



I DO A LOT OF CHARITY WORK. THAT IS IF VOLUNTEERING MY OPINION COUNTS...

I VOLUNTEER AT A LOCAL CHOCOLATE SHOP. THEY DIDN'T NEED ANY HELP, BUT I WOULDN'T TAKE "NO" FOR AN ANSWER!

