



NEWSLETTER

Kilbryde Hospice Volunteer View

Winter 2025

kilbryde
hospice
Caring across South Lanarkshire

KILBRYDE'S BACKROOM TEAM

IN this issue of Volunteer Newsletter we have spoken to some of the staff and volunteers who have joined the team here after working in a diverse number of careers with life stories to match.

Some have overcome unimaginable heartbreak and tragedy to get their lives back on track, with volunteering playing more than a little part in that recovery process.

ISSUE 7

WELCOME TO THE 7th
EDITION OF YOUR
REGULAR NEWSLETTER. IT
IS FOR YOU - THE KILBRYDE
HOSPICE TEAM OF
VOLUNTEERS.
WE HOPE YOU ENJOY IT.
PLEASE SEND US YOUR
NEWS AND PICS FOR THE
NEXT EDITION.



MARY: Her full story is on Page 3

Meet Mary Smith

ALMOST unnoticed, Mary clears tables in Joe's Bistro and helps out at fundraising events by selling raffles or whatever she is asked to do.

But Mary's volunteering at the hospice does not tell half the story of the turmoil and heartache she has gone through.

She lost her son to bowel cancer at the age of 28 and, by her own admission, Mary's life fell apart and understandably became a struggle.

Fast forward 13 years and Mary now supports people going through what she did, to such an extent that she delivered speeches at two hospice events, albeit describing herself as a 'bag of nerves' and oblivious to the standing ovation she was getting!

PATROLLING, RETAILING AND TEACHING!

VOLUNTEER Tricia Doris had a varied career path before joining the team here as a transport assistant, which involves caring for the people travelling on the hospice bus to Day Services.

She said: "I left school at 15 and went into hairdressing, working in Glasgow then Rutherglen, where I worked my way up to becoming the manager.

"At 19/20-years-old I joined the police, stationed at Rutherglen, Blantyre, The Gorbals and Craigie Street.

"I met my husband, who was also a police officer - our first meeting was in court, in attendance at the same case.

"By that time I was back in Rutherglen, where I worked for a few years before I fell pregnant and I left to raise my family."

The next few years were traumatic, to say the least, her son Anthony passing away at seven weeks old, never having left the hospital.

Tricia added: "Sadly my husband was killed in a road accident a year later.

"The boys, Steven and Charles, were still very young at the time...life throws curve balls at you all the time and you just have to deal with them.

"Although you never fully get over it, you have to look forward as there were two boys, aged two and four, who needed their mum to look after them.

"Unfortunately, Steven became very ill and was at death's door at one point and spent seven weeks in hospital - all within 18 months of losing the baby.

"However, he is fine now having had heart bypass surgery when he was 11 and is now a healthy 47-year-old.

"With a friend, we then opened a baby shop in Cambuslang, which I did while also looking after the boys until they went to high school.

"After that, I went back to college, got a degree and became a primary school teacher at St Joseph's, Blantyre.

"I had worked part-time in a Blantyre shop, been a police officer in Blantyre and now I was back there teaching!

"I settled there for 20 years before officially retiring, although I went back part-time.

"I had been involved with the hospice for many years, having known CEO Gordon, since he was a wee boy.

"Also, along with fellow parishioners at St Anthony's Rutherglen, Gordon and Canon Allison, we raised money to help build this place.

"I also helped with events during COVID and other small things intermittently. I remained on the mailing list and responded when there was an appeal for a volunteer transport assistant.

"I am giving something back and I am happy doing it. It is good to be able to reassure the patients, who are all very pleasant when they come onto the bus."

Away from volunteering, Tricia now has two grandchildren and a great granddaughter. Steven is 47 and Charles is 45-years-old.



From Spain to South Lanarkshire



NEWS ROUND: Andy retains an interest in local and national press

A RECENT regular at our Kickstart sessions was 87-year-old Andy Valente who described it as the 'highlight of my week'.

As well as fulsome praise for staff and volunteers, he gave pass marks to the food they serve.

He said: "They serve delightful Danish Pastries - which are not available in supermarkets - which is just as well as I would buy them all the time!

"Some have jam, others have custard and the pastry is super. We are served coffee and have a chat with each other when we first come in.

"I am also able to have a read at the various newspapers. I was a journalist, learning the trade here, then working in Spain for 62 years.

"Later on we enjoy a bowl of very good soup, a variety of sandwiches plus fresh fruit such as melon and pineapple".

A TALE OF COURAGE

“I was a child development officer with Glasgow City Council for 21 years . After I had trained at college for two years and worked in a hospital in Ayr, as a nursery nurse, I then went on to Shawbridge Nursery School, which had 120 children.

“There were people from very rich backgrounds and others from very poor backgrounds, while Pollokshaws itself had the second largest number of asylum seekers in Glasgow and there were 29 different languages spoken, with 120 children attending every day.

“As a result I have knowledge and communication with people from different languages, religions and cultures. But it was so interesting - I could be working with a boy or girl, followed by their three siblings in subsequent years, or an only child with no brothers and sisters to follow them.

“I had a great relationship with them, as well as the staff from Shawbridge Street Nursery and I still keep in touch with many of my former colleagues.

“After many years, due to a change in my working circumstances, I decided to job-share as we were moving to brand new premises while the head-teacher was retiring.

“But around about the same time, unfortunately my son, Stewart, was diagnosed with bowel cancer at 26-years-old and my head wasn’t in it. Life became very difficult for us as parents, and for him.

“I only worked in the new complex for a few months before my son had to go into Hairmyres for a major operation followed by eight weeks of intensive care.”

After two years of gruelling and intensive treatment Stewart sadly died - Mary could not go back to work and it took a long time for her to try and get on with my life.

She said: “I was always a very active person and just wasn’t coping very well. At one point I did my shopping in Hamilton instead of EK, as I couldn’t face anybody, but a lot of good friends round about us were a great support.

“Along with Stewart’s widow, I had counselling and aromatherapy at Red Deer Day Centre, which was where Kilbryde Hospice was based.

“The staff there helped me, from being unable to talk to anyone and struggling to cope, to being able to manage my life a bit better and, gradually, with their help I felt I could help also people in the same way.

“We didn’t have a cafe in the Red Deer Centre, only huge flasks which was a massive challenge to me, just making a cup of tea for people, because I had lost all my confidence.



Mary now helps in the cafe and at fundraising events, saying that: “Although it has taken a long time to get to this point, the hospice has helped me to get here.”

She added: “I know, when people come into the hospice and watch their loved ones receiving palliative care, exactly how they feel as I have been there.

“I am now friends with carers and others who have been bereaved - we have kept in contact - and this is how I can now help people and give them a wee bit of comfort.”

Thirteen years down the line Mary still sees Stewart’s widow who has since re-married and has two young children who call her ‘Granny’ which she says is a joy.

In addition, Mary and her family have raised £92,000 for Bowel Cancer Research in Stewart’s memory.

“While I have lots of bad moments, there are more good moments and I am grateful for what I have,” she said.

While clearing the tables at Joe’s Bistro in the hospice, Mary can sometimes offer comfort and support in the form of a chat, having noticed the person’s discomfort.

It may lead to a longer conversation, which can be of great help, while others may prefer not to respond which Mary totally understands.

Meanwhile, there are numerous regular customers who she knows by name. - she can tell you what their order will be - and this also helps as she continues to recover from the tragic loss of Stewart.

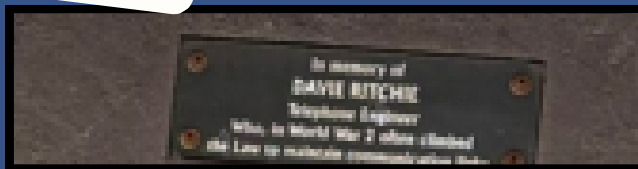
Teddy's Travels



Border patrol

FATHER and daughter volunteers, Frank and Gillian, took Teddy with them when they travelled to the Scottish Borders for a family celebration.

Teddy joined them when they climbed Berwick Law, which is 615ft high, with stunning views at the top, which made the effort worthwhile.



A LOCAL hero is commemorated on a bench at the summit of Berwick Law

The bench commemorates Davie Ritchie who, during WW2, was posted to man the lookout at the top of the hill.

Teddy was also fascinated by the replica whale's jawbone (pictured below)



KILBRYDE HOSPICE HITS THE ROAD



KILBRYDE ROADIES: As ever, a hospice event could not have run as smoothly as it did without the help of some of our volunteers, Pictures here, which were taken professionally by volunteer Robin Miller, are from the first ever Kilbryde Hospice Roadshow, which took place in Rutherglen

Competition Time

This quiz is just for fun!
Test your knowledge or
have fun Googling
the answers



How well do you know
the good ole' US of A ?

1. Which 15th century Italian sailor and explorer discovered America ?
2. The Statue of Liberty (pictured here) was gifted by which country ?
3. In what year and in which city was John F Kennedy assassinated?
4. Washington DC...what does DC stand for?
5. Who did James Earl Ray assassinate in Memphis in April 1968?
6. What is the highest grossing Hollywood movie of all time ?
7. Which state is known as The Sunshine State?
8. Who was the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic?



TRANSLATE THE FOLLOWING INTO OUR OWN LINGO... I put on my pants, shirt and sneakers to get ready take my station wagon to the gas station. On the way I stopped at the drug store, where I know the sales clerk. She told me about the realtor next door who had a fall, last fall, on the sidewalk. He had ended up in ER where the desk clerk gave him a big check for his treatment!

BISTRO'S IN MEMORY OF JOE LOWE: A TRIBUTE



AMONG the business conducted at the Kilbryde Hospice AGM was the rebranding of Kilbryde Kafe to Joe's Bistro in recognition of one of the hospice's most passionate fundraisers, Councillor Joe Lowe.

It was doubly appropriate as Joe was one of the Kafe's best customers and always took the opportunity, when he was in the building, to enjoy the fare on offer.

The announcement at the AGM was accompanied by a plaque unveiling by members of his family as a permanent reminder of a man who not only supported the hospice but dedicated more than 40 years of his life to public service as a councillor.

Joe was first elected to Hamilton District Council in 1980 and served as a local councillor ever year since then, before deciding not to stand again at the council elections of May 2022.

He continued to serve his constituents in Hamilton through the re-organisation of councils and the founding of South Lanarkshire in 1996 when the South Hamilton ward was created.

As she delivered a tribute to Joe just prior to the plaque unveiling, Lady Susan Haughey said: "Joe was a remarkable man who served faithfully for more than four decades, earning the respect of his colleagues and deep gratitude of his constituents.

"Alongside his public service, Joe was a passionate supporter of Kilbryde Hospice from the very beginning. He became a trustee in 2013 and, with his trademark humour, charm and determination, played a vital role in establishing this magnificent hospice.

"Joe had a unique gift for bringing people together...he knew the 'right' people and persuaded them, but above all he gave his time, humour and his heart. He was admired for his kindness and compassion as well as his unwavering belief that everyone deserved dignity and care."

Joe sadly passed away in February 2023 and among the numerous tributes that were made, was one from Council Leader Joe Fagan, who said: "Joe was always on the side of his local community and fought tirelessly over many decades to improve their lives. He will be sadly missed, and my thoughts go to all his family and friends."



BOWLED OVER

JOE was an honorary member of Eddlewood Bowling Club who have hosted a competition in his memory called The Joe Lowe Triples.

He was also instrumental in helping set up an international tournament in 2016 during which almost £5,000 was raised for Kilbryde Hospice.

Several internationalists took part including professional bowling champion Alex Marshall with hospice volunteer ambassador and Eddlewood member, Alex Watson, also playing a part in organising the day.

It became a regular event with around 200 competitors taking part and, to date, has raised a huge amount over the years.

The bowls competition is held in memory of one of the club's founding members, Peter Conway, who passed away with pancreatic cancer in 2004.

MY JOURNEY

In this feature, your Volunteer Newsletter will tell the story of a staff member or volunteer as they retrace their career path

CATERING LEAD GEORGE BLACKWOOD

GEORGE began his career through a Youth Training Scheme at Farmfoods before discovering his true passion in catering. After early roles in retail, he joined the Hilton Hotel in Glasgow, where he progressed from kitchen porter to commis chef, gaining hands-on experience in professional kitchens.

His career took him through some of Glasgow's busiest and most respected venues, including Café Cini and Caffè Uno, where he served as Head Chef for over six years.

Seeking to broaden his experience, George joined Butlins in Minehead to master large-scale catering — serving breakfast, lunch, and dinner to over 5,000 people each day. He describes it as one of the best learning experiences of his career, developing calmness and control under extreme pressure.

After several years in London's thriving food scene, working in gastro pubs such as The Fine Line and The Crown in Islington, George found family life pulling him back to Glasgow. "My son had started talking with an English accent — he sounded like an extra from Eastenders," George recalls with a smile.

The real turning point came when his son told him he 'never sees him anymore' due to the long hours and heavy commitment of retail catering. That conversation inspired George to move into care catering, where he could achieve a better work-life balance while still doing what he loved. He went on to deliver healthy eating programmes, manage care home kitchens, and earn his diploma in food hygiene, becoming a certified trainer.

Written by George Blackwood

Game Changer

George joined Kilbryde Hospice to enhance the quality of food for patients and day services while revitalising the on-site café. Under his leadership, the café has tripled its business and become a welcoming hub for staff, visitors, and the wider community.

He credits the hospice's 47 volunteers as the heart of the café's success and describes Kilbryde Hospice as "a game-changer" — the first place he can see himself retiring from.

His approach to catering now goes far beyond food, focusing on service, compassion, and genuine connection with the people he serves.



- Christmas Special Edition of Volunteer Newsletter
- Volunteer Thank-you event on Monday, December 8
- My Journey - special guest

Behind the scenes at Kilbryde Hospice Part 1

WHEN Fiona, our volunteer support officer, was on a recruitment drive, she suggested to former police officer, Andy Barclay, that he could work in our cafe, now Joe's Bistro.

His initial thought was 'I've worked with riot shields and suchlike, I just don't see myself working in a cafe', but he ended up joining the catering team and thoroughly enjoyed it.

When he was being shown round the hospice by Fiona, cafe staff member Jackie said: "Do you remember me?" It turned out that were in the same class at primary school.

Before he could deny it, or otherwise, Jackie had produced a class picture and the memories came flooding back.

His initial reaction when someone tells Andy that they know his is 'I have either jailed you or kicked you playing football!'.

However, eventually Fiona's amazing talent for matching volunteers to the right job kicked in and Andy found himself in his comfort zone...here is his story -

"I have just turned 65, which is not the milestone that it was as I need to wait another year for my state pension.

"I retired from full-time work with Strathclyde Police 12 years ago after three decades, previous to that I had worked as an engineer with Weir Pumps in Glasgow for eight years.

Redundancy notices had been flying around so I took the chance, successfully applied for voluntary redundancy and joined the police at 23-years-old.

Workwise, since leaving school I only had these two jobs which took me to 2013 when I started doing voluntary work, ferrying people to and from hospitals in the Glasgow area.

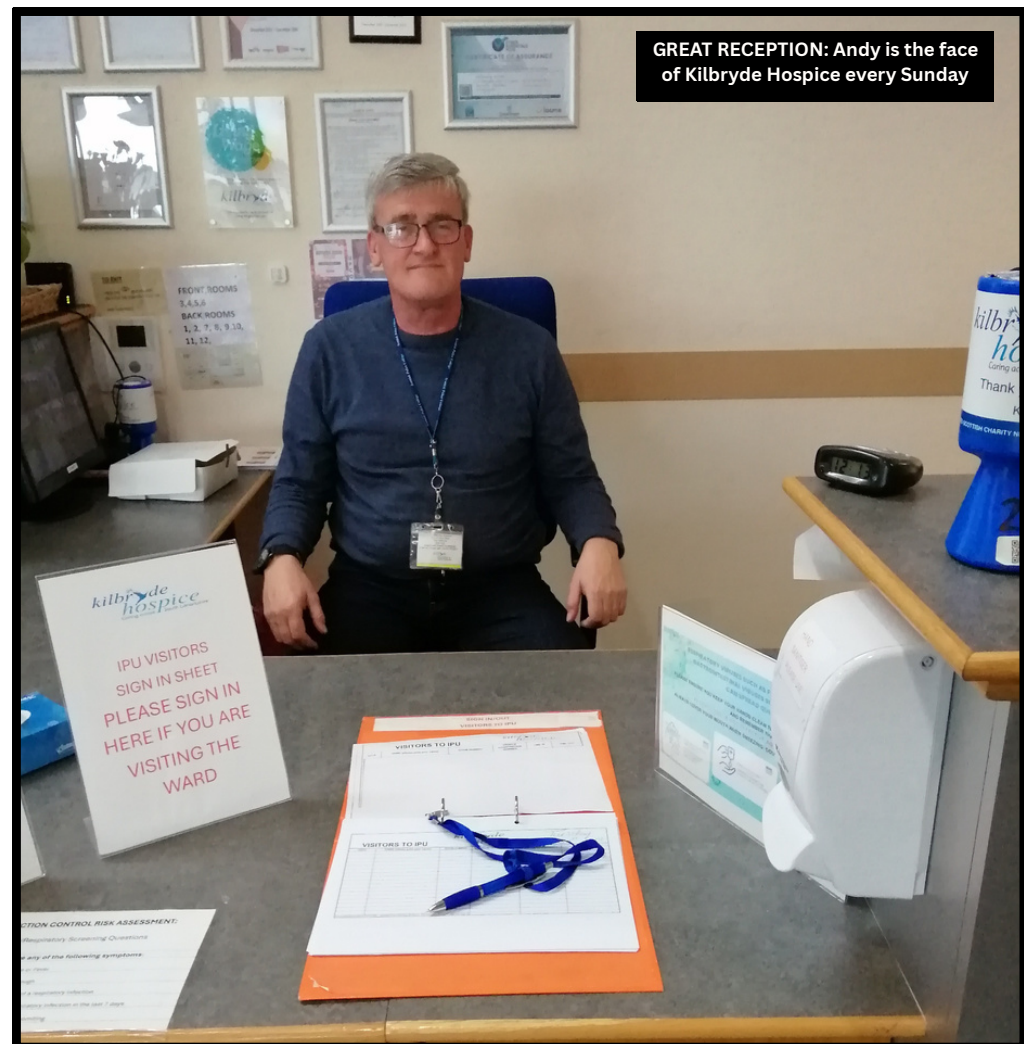
I then took a part-time job in Asda, which I did for seven years. Around that time my wife's health was poor and she was diagnosed with Parkinson's, so I gave up work to care for her.

Sadly she passed away in 2021 and it was at the end of that year that I made the difficult decision to donate her stuff to charity.

And that is where I met the irrepressible Fiona Swinger who at the time was manager of a Chest, Heart and Stroke retail unit.

She was looking for volunteers and it was a good place to work - for a year or so until Fiona left.

Around that time, Asda asked me back to work in security so I returned there but, almost immediately, I felt I had made a mistake.



The charity shop had been great, working two or three days a week, especially due to my circumstances and the fact that we were in our third lockdown.

I also met my friend, Marlene, who is widowed. Her husband had actually passed away here in Kilbryde Hospice just after they both retired - they actually got married in here.

So that was my inroad into Kilbryde Hospice and when Fiona invited me to get involved she suggested the cafe.

I ended up working there for six happy months until a position came up which was ideal for someone with a background in security.

So I now volunteer every Sunday afternoon, signing visitors in and out of the IPU, for around five or six hours.

Because of my friend's experience I know what the hospice provides and I feel I want to give back by doing whatever I can to help out here.

I lost my mum eight years ago. She had cancer and was in hospital. Kilbryde never had the beds at the time so she was shipped over to St Andrews Hospice in Airdrie.

So even back then I realised how much the hospice relies on charity donations and volunteers giving their time so I am delighted to help by also volunteering.

Behind the scenes at Kilbryde Hospice Part 2

BRINGING a new perspective to yoga is volunteer Pamela Greer, who is the third ex-member of our police force to feature in the Newsletter. Here is her story...

I am a retired police officer, having worked in the traffic department before moving to Helen Street for a short time then back to Motherwell.

Motherwell covered an area from the border with Dumfries and Galloway, all the way north to the Castlecary Arches, a total of around 100sq miles.

In my later service I was a Family Liaison Officer, dealing with families after road deaths which was difficult but also really rewarding.

It taught me how to be supportive of people and taught me how to deal with people by using the right words.

I have learned how to be empathetic with people who are going through the worst time of their life.

The first thing you must do is have a plan in place so that you know what the best time is to exit.

At one point I was dealing with four families at the onetime which was difficult and it was stressful as I worried about getting caught up and tongue-tied.

I lost a loved one to breast cancer and it was a very traumatic time to try and recover from and then I lost my dad.

In that situation you just want people to be supportive and, but with family liaison you have other things to do and you must get the balance right.

I retired seven years ago but had already trained to teach yoga so, when I worked in Motherwell I used to teach yoga.



Sandra [Davidson] worked in the office at Motherwell and we became friends then and she used to come to my yoga classes.

We kept in touch after I had retired and decided to teach yoga – out of the blue Sandra said, ‘how would you like to come to Kilbryde Hospice and teach yoga classes?’

I live in Coatbridge and my relative had passed away in St Andrews Hospice so when I got married we asked for donations instead of gifts

These were split between St Andrews and Prince and Princess of Wales Hospice, where my husband’s mother had passed away with Parkinsons.

Both hospices sent beautiful letters of thanks saying how grateful they were that we had been able to donate money that we received instead of wedding presents.

Fast forward and I started to coming to Kilbryde Hospice around two years ago – it had taken me a while to get back to normal life after working shifts and such with the police.

As well as teaching yoga, I am an unpaid carer for my mum and also go to a sheltered housing unit where I teach chair yoga to the residents.

I come to Kilbryde on a Wednesday where a 12-week programme runs in Day Services - my volunteering job is to teach yoga, seated.

That is so important because not everyone can do yoga standing and a lot of the patients have Parkinsons which affects the balance.

A wheelchair-user does the yoga staying in the wheelchair, while another with mobility issues sits in a sofa– it is a case of ‘meet your body where it’s at that day’.

So, if you have had a tiring day, not slept well, not eating well, then you do not have to do all the movements.

If they know they can’t lift their arm to the ceiling, then don’t try it. Take their arm as high as they can manage and if they can’t? Then lift your finger!

The other thing we teach in the class, more so for someone who can’t lift their leg, is to close your eyes and use brain awareness to your leg.

You visualise lifting you leg up and down, like everybody else is doing, so you are still getting the brain-muscle connection to feel energetic.

Similarly with any part of the body as we don’t just work the muscles, we work the brain as well.

We do lots of different movements which all have different names, such as contralateral which is left arm and right leg, or vice versa, moving at the same time.

These really work the brain as well as balance and for someone who has Parkinsons that is very important.



CAN YOU HELP?

COLLECTION CAN VOLUNTEERS WANTED

If you have a car and a couple of hours to spare weekly or fortnightly, the fundraising team would love to have you on board. You would be part of a team raising vital funds for Kilbryde Hospice.

Contact fundraising@kilbrydehospice.org.uk for more information

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

DEC 6	CHRISTMAS PARTY NIGHT at Eglinton Arms, Eaglesham	2 volunteers from 6pm to approx 11pm
DEC 6	HAMILTON MARKETS	1 volunteer (10am-noon) 2 volunteers (2pm-4pm)
DEC 6	BREAKFAST WITH SANTA at Moncreiff Parish Church	2 volunteers from 9am until 1pm
DEC 7	MAGICAL MYSTEKAL MARKET at Holiday Inn, East Kilbride	2 volunteers (10am-1pm) 2 volunteers (1pm-4pm)
DEC 7	BREAKFAST WITH SANTA at Hamilton Racecourse	2 volunteers from 9am until 11am
DEC 7	SANTA DASH at Hamilton Racecourse	5 volunteers from 9am until 1pm
DEC 13	BREAKFAST WITH SANTA at West Kirk, East Kilbride	2 volunteers from 9am until 1pm
DEC 13	CHRISTMAS PARTY NIGHT at Eglinton Arms, Eaglesham	2 volunteers from 6pm to approx 11pm
DEC 20	HAMILTON MARKETS	1 volunteer (10am-noon) 1 volunteers (2pm-4pm)

Email fundraising@kilbrydehospice.org.uk if you can help

CHAIR YOGA

FOLLOWING on from Pamela's story on page nine, she now gives a brief explanation of Chair Yoga, which can be carried out by anyone - sitting watching the TV at home, doing with a musical background, really anything that you are comfortable with. Give it a try Kilbryde Volunteers, you know you want to.

She said: "I have learned a lot of things over the years doing this and now put them into practice at Kilbryde Hospice."

SLEEP: move your eyes in a kind of infinity with your eyelids closed, up-down-right-left-all around, which tricks your brain into thinking you are in an REM (rapid eye movement) state which helps if you can't sleep. Just do it for a couple of minutes and your brain thinks you are sleeping, so you nod off. Several people have confirmed that it works.

This is called Yoga Nidra, where you go through a body sequence when you are giving your brain something to do so, while it is doing that, it is actually switching off the rest of your body.

The West is slowly catching up with these methods. They originated in Ancient India, nidra meaning sleep, and the interpretation being 'the sleep caused by yoga'.

VAGUS NERVE: I have recently been attending training sessions for chair yoga and learning all about the vagus nerve, which is the biggest nerve in the body and is so important. I have been teaching yoga for 15 years and still learning so much and constantly studying.

This is more about **NEUROPLASTICITY**, which stimulates the vagus nerve. The way I like describing it is 'calm and collected'. When you are doing yoga it is repetition as well as doing other things. So over time this creates the ideal conditions for neuroplasticity.

This is defined as the brain's ability to learn and adapt to absorb information and evolve to manage new challenges. It's a natural gift that allows you as a person to develop and take on the ever-changing tasks of daily life.

MINDFUL MOVEMENT: In my classes we do a 'fully present' to start with, then what we call **ASANA PRACTICE** which is the movement part and has been adapted for doing on a chair. We sometimes do breathwork which is followed by relaxation.

It is shortened from a normal hour-long class because people are tired, having given so much earlier on. What I do is gauge how everybody is feeling – I can usually tell just by looking around.



HANDS UP: Demonstrating how easy it can be, Pamela is pictured leading a class in our Meeting Room. Just a simple task like lifting your arms can help blow away the cobwebs!

But we still do gentle movements only. For me it is really rewarding because what happens is because what I am getting back from the patients helps me learn and also with my studying.

I know very quickly by their feedback if it is working with the class in Day Services, which makes it a learning curve for me.

One of the ladies who came to the chair yoga had a tremor, caused by her Parkinsons, but after the class her tremor was gone.

Although that was a temporary thing, if you are doing these exercises then they are going to help the balance.

Just doing little things help people cope with the condition that they have – it won't cure it but it will help manage it better.

Sometimes I leave here with a big smile on my face because the patients are so lovely and they are so grateful.

One of the men recently said that he is convinced that the chair yoga has helped his balance – this shows it happens and is working.

I am not asking people to take part in a half-hour class every day but you can be sitting in your house – during the adverts as I always joke – and doing a wee bit of exercise.

It can be moving your arm, leg, head, hands, really anything. Raise your hands to the ceiling if you can... cross your arms and touch your shoulders...lift your leg as high as possible with your knee bent...stretch your leg while pointing your toes away from you.