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## Excitement as Compaid's Training Centre re-opens



Sylvia

On 28th September we were delighted to re-open our Training Centre, welcoming back a limited number of clients into a safe, supportive Covid secure environment. A warm welcome from staff and volunteers awaited those returning to the Centre and everyone quickly adapted to the new surroundings.

During lockdown a lot of work was undertaken to ensure the Centre is Covid compliant. Misting and additional cleaning facilities have been installed on site, we are asking everyone to wear masks or visors, and employ social distancing measures by moving work stations apart to safely accommodate the learners who wish to return. Our re-opening enables them to once again leave their homes and benefit from the much needed social interaction we can offer, the chance to re-unite with friends and also allow some respite to their partners and family members.



Evelyn (Client) and Sheila (Volunteer)

## Training Centre – adapting to the “new normal”

March seems a long time ago now when, following Government advice, Compaid had to close its doors in order to keep people safe. However, we were determined to find ways to keep in touch with our clients, and maintain the contact and support which we know is so vital for them in helping combat the associated increases in loneliness and social isolation.

Soon after the lockdown started we began offering remote sessions to our clients. Compaid staff and volunteers were able to 'dial in' to clients' computers using **Teamviewer** - rather like an IT Helpdesk where someone takes control of your computer without being in the room. It is rather an eerie experience seeing the mouse pointer moving around the screen on its own, but our clients quickly got used to it! Clients who wanted to do this but who did not have a suitable device have been lent computers from the centre stock, or given computers or tablets generously donated or funded from a variety of sources.

We have discovered a variety of new activities and packages which are free to use, allowing clients to continue their work outside the remote sessions. One of the most popular is *Autodesk Sketchbook*, a free but well-equipped painting application. This turned out to be a perfect temporary substitute for Corel Photo Paint, which we use under licence in the Centre. Some clients have been overjoyed to find that their art sessions can be restarted at home, with only a relatively small reduction in the range of paint brushes and tools available. One client who has been particularly busy over



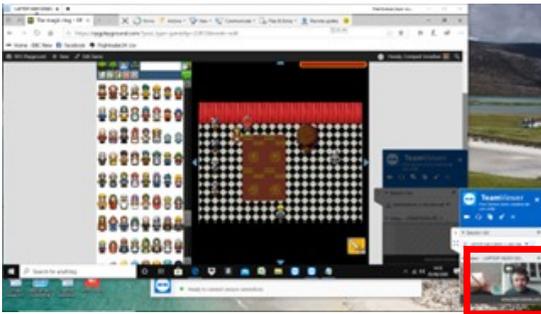
lockdown is Gemma Robinson, who created this lovely painting of Port Isaac in Cornwall.

*Gemma says: “I have been really enjoying working with Val doing lots of art pics using a paint app and have also been really enjoying doing my family tree with Jonathan and Rob”.*

Another keen artist is **Jane Sanderson**, who has painted this beautiful kingfisher and a very atmospheric view of Felixstowe using Autodesk Sketchbook at home.



Another popular activity over the course of the summer has been **RPG Playground**, an easy online tool for making Role-Playing Games: the sort of game which usually consists of a character exploring a fictional world, embarking on heroic quests and bashing the occasional monster with a sword!



One of our long-standing clients, **Bob** (pictured below) used to write scripts for Dungeons and Dragons, and has put together a large game with – so far – three separate quests in the same world.

A fourth is, at the time of writing, under construction. You can play Bob's RPG at <https://rpgplayground.com/game/the-magic-ring/>

TeamViewer in action - **Bob** is using it in his own home, linking with Centre Manager, **Jonathan Sargent** who can be seen in the red square at the bottom right of the screen above.



Another client, **Gemma**, has created her first-ever RPG, about a rather unusual game of hide and seek. She is already working on an ambitious follow-up, 'The Runaway Chicken'. You can play Gemma's game at <https://rpgplayground.com/game/hide-and-seek/>.

However, remote sessions can't replicate the social atmosphere of the Compaid centre, and for those clients who have not wanted remote sessions, Compaid staff and volunteers have been making phone calls and emailing at least once a week to keep in touch. Some clients – like many other people – have experienced a deterioration in their general mental health during lockdown, and these phone calls have aimed to reduce feelings of isolation and ensure clients know that we are still thinking of them and making the effort to keep in touch.

During lockdown, Compaid Voice Editor **Jenny Wythes** devoted her time and energy to regularly producing a “Compaid Newsletter”. This provided a “weekly slice of Compaid” and contained news, useful websites, jokes, quizzes and clients’ artwork, as well as topical themes contributed by readers such as a “Recipe of the week” and “Lockdown Top Twenty”. **Compaid Weekly News** ran for 28 weeks and was sent out to clients, staff, volunteers and trustees.



Despite current concerns about a resurgence of the virus, many of our clients have taken advantage of the reopening of the centre, and have commented how much they missed coming to Compaid, and how glad they are to be back.

Client **Wendy** is pictured on her first day back with driver **Amanda**.

**David Manktelow** has written down his thoughts on the lockdown and returning to Compaid below:



*“It started like every Thursday and then Jonathan (Training Centre Co-ordinator) telephoned and told me that due to the virus that was going around Compaid would be closed until further notice.*

*While the lockdown was on I listened to my cassette tapes and my compact discs. I did jigsaw puzzles, crosswords, dot to dot, word searches and read books and it helped to pass the time. Jonathan gave me a tablet so I could play games on it. My sister Rosemary rang me from time to time to see how I was keeping.*

*Towards the end of September Rosemary rang me up to tell me that Compaid was open again and I would be going on Monday for half a day. I am very happy to be back at Compaid and on my computer again.”*

While the lockdown has been a trial for most of us, it hasn't been without its benefits to Compaid, and one of those is to have opened our eyes to the possibilities of remote working. Whereas up until March Compaid had a catchment area covering Kent and neighbouring areas, through remote working we can offer our services much further afield – theoretically anywhere in the country!



New  
jobcentreplus  
project for  
Maidstone

At the end of September, we began a new 12 month digital skills training project for disabled job seekers in and around Maidstone. Clients are referred to us from Maidstone Job Centre and are offered 8 one to one sessions. They may be in need of help as a result of digital exclusion or living with a range of difficulties, including mental health, disability, social, financial or other personal challenges.

This contract from the Department of Work represents our first work from DWP since Central Government invested more money into the South Eastern job centres. 44% of people who have become unemployed since lockdown began are in London and the South East Counties.

Our previous East Kent trainer, **Callan Thompson**, has re-joined us for the project and we have taken a short lease on an office in the Maidstone Community Support Centre so that people can receive face to face support in a Covid secure environment. We expect to help at least 60 people get back into work or into employment for the first time, between now and the end of 2021.

## **Job Centre Plus work at our Training Centre in Paddock Wood**

Compaid continues to work with other clients who are referred to us by local Job Centres and Housing Associations. After an initial assessment they are booked in for up to 8 Digital Skills Training sessions with us.

Clients are supported with one to one sessions and receive as much help as they need. The online **Learn My Way** platform is used as a basis to build up basic Digital Skills knowledge, then a mixture of online resources are used to help clients further their expertise. Sessions are tailored to clients' needs with a focus on moving them closer to employment.

When lockdown hit the sessions were suspended, but one of our trainers began to work remotely with a client using the online video-conferencing website Zoom. This went well and the client was very appreciative of the support he received, which in turn gave him the confidence to buy a laptop of his own.

When the Training Centre reopened, sessions re-started with clients feeling safe in the Covid secure environment and with adaptations made to the way training is provided. Clients are able to develop their digital skills, use jobsites and access various accounts they have set up.

Clients can gain confidence in using the computer and become more independent in safely accessing the internet. In the past we have had clients find employment or volunteering opportunities to build their self-confidence, and hope that many of our present and future clients will benefit in similar ways.

## Compaid's Big Give Christmas Challenge

Our Big Give Christmas Challenge returns next month (December) to raise money towards our digital skills training services.

Every donation made to Compaid online at the Big Give between **1- 8 December 2020** will be matched pound for pound through a special matching pot, created with donations from a number of Compaid Trustees and the Monday Charitable Trust.

This means that a £10 donation will be worth at least £20 to Compaid, and if you are a UK tax payer, we can claim an extra £2.50 on every £10 given in this way.

Last year's campaign raised just under **£5,000** to help run our Transport Service, and this year we hope to raise nearly **£8,000** towards our digital skills training. This work has never been more important than during the UK lockdown, when those without digital skills and confidence have had nowhere else to turn.

We'll be communicating more news about this year's Campaign in the run up to December, via our social media channels on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. We hope that everyone can support this appeal in some way, either by giving directly or by sharing the details with their family and friends.



## Hello from our new Transport Booking Officer - Sean Matthews



A little about me ...

I have been working in the logistics industry for the past 10 years, picking up a wealth of experience along the way. I am used to adapting to the ever-changing laws, legislations and regulations that affect the transport industry.

In my spare time I spend my weekends volunteering as a Qualified FA Coach for Tonbridge Juniors Football Club, as well as taking a place on the Committee as Assistant General manager for the whole club. With nearly 800 children signed up there is never a dull moment!! If I'm not coaching then I'm watching the football and am a massive Chelsea fan.

I'm thrilled to become a member of the Compaid Family and look forward to being involved in the already well run Transport department.



Eight of the twenty-one vehicles in our fleet

## Compaid Transport Services– Covid and beyond!

Compaid's Transport Service did not stop working during lockdown but continued to help those in need. Our Transport Manager **Andy Allen** spoke to over 100 of our regular shoppers and dial-a-ride users to understand what the immediate requirements were of those in self-isolation, what local or family support they were receiving, and what unmet needs Compaid could usefully fill with our available transport.

For a few clients living remotely our drivers were delivering a pro-active shopping service, obtaining a list of essential items from each individual, and arranging a click and collect service so that the driver could bring the items straight to the vulnerable person's home. Where individuals still needed to attend medical appointments, our staff and volunteers provided this. We were delighted to receive positive feedback from our clients:

*"The service is excellent, there should be more residents using it!"*

*"I'm so glad this service was running, I don't know what I'd have done without it"*



At the start of lockdown passenger numbers did fall, but we are now seeing these increase again and hope to help many more going forward.

We are delighted to welcome back shoppers and other clients who rely on us to get out and about.



### Could we help you, or someone you know?

We offer a range of services providing transport for disabled, elderly and

vulnerable people in Kent and East Sussex. Our fleet of 21 vehicles varies in size from a small bus to 16 seater wheelchair accessible minibuses.



All our vehicles are regularly cleaned and maintained to the highest standards. Our drivers and passenger assistants are all DBS checked and attend regular training sessions to keep up to date with the latest regulations and requirements. To comply with current Covid regulations all staff are required to wear PPE and passengers, who are able, to wear masks. Vehicles are thoroughly cleaned at the end of each journey to ensure passenger safety. Our services include:

**Dial-a-ride services** – allowing individuals to travel to hospital or GP appointments, or to visit family and friends. Bookings need be made up to one week in advance as demand is high. This service covers Sevenoaks, Maidstone and Dartford areas.

**Shoppers' buses** – allowing elderly and vulnerable people to access shops in the Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells, Maidstone, Sittingbourne and Ashford areas.

**Private journeys** – would you like to go on a special day out? Do you need transport to a family wedding or special event? Working with residential homes and other local charities to provide transport for their clients to and from day centres, including our own Training Centre in Paddock Wood.

In addition we have contracts for special educational needs children requiring transport to schools covering Ashford, Sittingbourne, North West Kent, Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Maidstone.

If you, or someone you know or care for, are in need of transport please call us on **01892 832447** or email [transport@compaid.org.uk](mailto:transport@compaid.org.uk)

## Jim Scrimgeour – in memory

A much loved and valued colleague, Jim Scrimgeour, sadly passed away in August after a long and incredibly brave battle with cancer.

Jim had joined Compaid in 2014, initially as a volunteer driver, having previously held senior driving and management positions with Arriva and other local bus companies. Jim soon moved from being a volunteer to a paid driving role at Compaid, and in 2017 he moved up to become Transport Service Manager. Jim was extremely popular among his team, noted for his fairness in dealing with any difficulties, and always ready with a joke and a smile.

Jim stood down from the management position in late 2019, to focus on his medical treatment. His sad death in August was a blow to all of us, and many Compaid staff and volunteers, past and present, attended Jim's service at Tunbridge Wells Crematorium in early September. Joining family and friends, and with the service broadcast outside the venue for those who couldn't get inside, all present relived happy memories of Jim with readings, photographs, and Jim's favourite music, including themes from Star Trek and Monty Python's "Always Look on the Bright Side of Life".

We are planning to dedicate one of our minibuses to Jim's memory, and those of us who worked with Jim will never forget him.

Jim pictured with  
Chief Executive  
Stephen Elsdon



# Barclays back new tablets and data for digitally excluded households



Compaid has received a £100,000 grant from Barclays Bank to help digitally excluded people get on line during lockdown and the ongoing pandemic.

The grant is one of 100 similar sized grants the Bank has made across the UK, and half of the money coming to Compaid will be used to buy tablets, laptops, and preloaded MIFI units that can allow wireless connections in homes without a cabled broadband link.

Our experience during lockdown is that many people simply don't have the devices or connections at home to get online, and this has further marginalised and isolated many vulnerable people as the rest of us get more of our information and entertainment via the internet. The grant from Barclays will fund our work to train digitally excluded people, and our transport service working with shielding and isolated disabled and older people.

The Barclays grant has to be spent over the next six months, and we are working with housing associations and local councils to identify recipients of the new devices and data plans.

Here's **Gemma** with staff member **Val**, using one of our new computers to work on her painting.



## New partnerships and looking to the future...

Compaid is a firm advocate of partnerships where we can share expertise and resources with other local charities and have a greater positive impact on the lives of those we support.

Since the Coronavirus outbreak, we have registered with local community hubs to ensure our services are working in a complementary way with others. This collaboration allows us to identify vulnerable people, not previously known to us, and let them know how they might benefit from our services. One example of this was a request from Sevenoaks District Council, which resulted in the production of a number of Zoom user guides and tutorial videos, developed by our Training Centre Co-ordinator **Jonathan Sargent** (pictured right) for older people in Sevenoaks.

Here is a link to them: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCImwG2Njoh5BXTUCgR6DrVg>



Our charity is also a founding member of **Age Well West Kent**, an independent charity co-ordinating support for older people in the local area. AWWK works in partnership with the West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group and the local Primary Care Trust to identify and plug unmet needs. Through this relationship we are collaborating with a number of services for older people to ensure we don't duplicate effort at this time. We are also exploring other avenues of co-operation involving up to a dozen local charities through the Kent Collaboration Group.

This Group will establish some shared objectives around social inclusion, mental health support and strong families, and work with partners to deliver projects which focus on harnessing the skills and expertise of each member of the group. The timescales will be dependent on Government Coronavirus guidelines and how the social care system emerges from the restrictions imposed by Covid 19. However, we are determined to work as quickly as possible to make any new initiatives a reality for those in need.

# Are you interested in becoming a Volunteer?

## An appeal from our HR Administrator, Judith Williams

As I write this I can't believe that the leaves on the trees outside are already turning and that the end of the year is fast approaching. It is strange to be working mainly from my spare bedroom after being furloughed for a number of months in the summer like many other people. I am pleased now to be back working on a more regular basis and am keen to find more volunteers.

As you know, Compaid is always looking for new volunteers to support our work but in these different Covid times we are having to adapt how this is delivered. Many who receive support with their digital skills are, understandably, opting to receive this in their own homes via video links or telephone calls. Ensuring that both clients and volunteers are not at any kind of risk is of paramount importance and has been my main focus when developing this new way of volunteering.

Working closely with Jonathan, our Centre Manager, we have put together a programme of safeguarding measures ensuring that Compaid is able to continue to provide a high level of volunteer support without compromising the client centred approach that Compaid is known for.

If you or anyone you know would like to find out more, please contact me at [judith.williams@compaid.org.uk](mailto:judith.williams@compaid.org.uk) or by phone on 07856 409246.

# VOLUNTEER





## Clients' Christmas Raffle



Due to the current Covid restrictions unfortunately our Christmas celebrations will be unable to take place this year, so we will be holding a raffle for our clients. We are very fortunate to be receiving support from Asda in Tunbridge Wells who are providing two luxury hampers which we know will make this Christmas extra special for the lucky winners. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Janet Gilmore (Asda Community Life Host), staff and customers at Asda, Tunbridge Wells for their support. Watch out for further details in the Training Centre!



While Compaid receives funding from a number of sources, voluntary donations remain a vital source of income if we are to continue changing lives and reducing isolation for vulnerable people. Our small team of paid fundraisers and enthusiastic volunteers work hard to gain the support of local and national organisations.

The coronavirus has had a significant effect on our normal operating income which is considerably depressed due to lockdown, specifically the expected long term closure of day centres for which Compaid normally provides extensive service user transport. With this in mind we will need your support more than ever this year!

We have been very thankful to secure some significant grants and emergency funding during this pandemic which has enabled us to continue delivering our essential services to some of the most vulnerable across Kent. We hope and expect that normal operations and associated income will be restored by March 2021.

We would like to thank the following trusts and foundations that have been instrumental in supporting our work this year:

Tesco, Francis Winham Trust, Hospital Saturday fund, Colyer Fergusson, National lottery, Kent Community foundation, Sir Edward Lewis Foundation, Calleva Foundation, Bruce Wake Charitable trust, The Lawson Endowment, Thomas J Horne memorial fund and The Sobell Foundation.

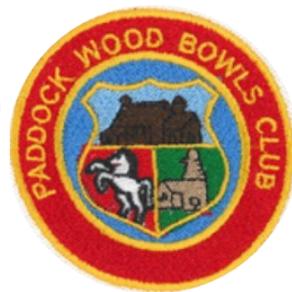
Your support is extremely important to us so we hope you will get involved with our **Big Give campaign** in December or **Save and Raise** through **Easy fundraising** whilst you enjoy your online Christmas shopping.

## **What you've been up to during lockdown.....**

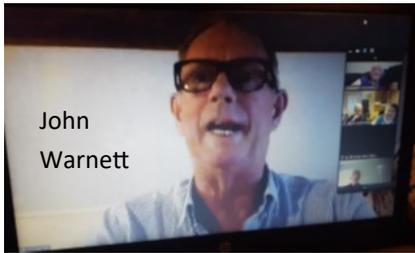
Back at the start of lockdown we wanted to find a way for people to get together and share a cuppa or two. A few of you rose to the challenge and organised Zoom coffee mornings, door step plant sales, and generally rallied round to support each other. These amazing gestures raised over **£260** which has enabled us to support even more vulnerable and isolated people in our community.

## **Zooming good Quizzes!**

June quickly turned into quiz fever, as there was not a lot for people to do and meeting up to socialise was out of the question, so Zoom quizzes quickly became the weekly entertainment. Our wonderful friends at **Paddock Wood Bowls Club** decided to throw down the gauntlet and challenge teams to come together to raise some funds for Compaid as we were delighted to have been voted as their charity of the



year for a second term. Huge thanks go to Kate & Keith Merrin for organising and Derek Hobbs, club treasurer for ensuring the amazing **£315** raised was received.



Virtual quizzes continued into August when we were delighted to be chosen as the recipient of another fun event. Huge thanks to BBC Radio Kent presenter **John Warnett**, who hosted and to **Matthew Fraser**, **James Willis** and **Eunice Doswell** for organising the event.

Nine teams participated, and the winners were decided by a tie-break question. Congratulations to the “Sprott on Sea” team (**Val Sprott** is our Training Services Manager) who beat “TW Twisters” (**Stephen Elsdén’s** team – our Chief Exec) by one point! This nail biting fun packed evening raised over **£180**.

## Farewell Paddock Wood Lionesses

At the end of June after more than 30 years’ service to the local community, and to the wider Lions international movement, we were sad to learn that Paddock Wood and District Lionesses were closing. We were delighted to receive a donation from their fundraising proceeds which were shared between local causes. Treasurer Lauren Marchant went on to report that members were hoping to continue their work for local causes in the form of a new club and details would be announced in due course.

# Save and Raise from home



There are so many ways that you can continue raising much needed funds for **Compaid** at home. Why not send a loved one a little something to let them know you're thinking of them? Get your thinking caps on for rainy day half term activities, or even start to get organised for the upcoming Christmas season. (Only 53 days away!) Don't forget, there are so many ways to support Compaid at no extra cost to you!

Shop now using Easyfundraising : <http://efraising.org/FqYMXSEjdo>

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