



August 2024
Chat Central News

Chat Central is a National Lottery Funded project where we help people to find others with similar interests, to have fun, get out of the house, join in with a hobby, get involved with their community and to find new friends, tackling loneliness and isolation in all its forms in Coventry.

We help people to explore their interests and start doing the things they want to do. Our support is tailored to the person's needs and can be anything from a one-off visit to us for information to longer term support. We have a range of activities including welcome sessions, walks, arts and crafts, yoga, pool, bingo, group volunteering and health talks. Our aim is to reach-out and help anyone in Coventry who is 18 and over, especially if they are bereaved, retired, a new parent, just out of hospital, dealing with an illness or condition that limits their ability to get out, recently arrived in the city or just out of practice with socialising. We help people to:

meet new friends

rediscover interests

Or find new ones

build confidence

volunteer

We've had a bumper few months at Chat Central and hosted a wide variety of activities, from bowls to Bollywood dance, craft sessions to canoeing, songwriting to seed bomb making and tennis to Tai Chi. All with the aim of connecting people, reducing isolation and building confidence. Volunteers' Week was another highlight with us taking the opportunity to get involved with local projects as well as thanking our wonderful volunteers. Our Chat Central Celebration was also the perfect way to reflect on the successes of Chat Central so far. Read on to hear all about it...



Give it a Go Thursdays!

Our 'Give it a Go Thursdays' offer the perfect opportunity to try or learn something new in a friendly, supportive and relaxed environment. We meet **every other Thursday at the United Reformed Church Hall between 2:00 and 4:00** and there's always the chance for a catch up and a cuppa too. Mandy's 'Dance Energise' session made everyone feel great as we moved, shook maracas and sang along to lots of uplifting tunes. We welcomed Warwickshire Wildlife Trust who told us all about the Sherbourne Vally Project and ways in which to volunteer with them, as well as making seed bombs and bird feeders. We've also enjoyed sessions led by our own volunteers. John led a songwriting session in which he shared his musical knowledge and supported participants to write and record a song. We look forward to hearing the completed track at the next songwriting session on **Thursday 5th September**. We also welcomed back Linda who led a wonderful 'Doodle Power' session which provided a creative and relaxing afternoon. If you have a hobby or a skill that you'd like to share with the group, then speak to Celia or Sarah about volunteering with us.



Wellbeing Walks and Mindfulness

Jane's 'Mindfulness Made Easy' session was very popular with everyone demonstrating a real desire to take time to be aware, slow down, and to be more 'in the moment'. We practiced mindful eating and breathing and were encouraged to use all of our senses to appreciate the flowers that Jane had brought in for us to enjoy.

We also joined the EnV team on some Wellbeing Talks and Walks in which we talked in small groups about being more active and connected. The event in the War Memorial Park concluded with a senses walk in the Peace Garden, whilst at the second event participants set personal wellness goals. Chat Central also led walks following the city's Peace Trail and to the Charterhouse Heritage Park and River Sherbourne.



MINDFULNESS,
WELLBEING TALKS
AND WALKS

Mission Possible: Pick n Mix Fri-Yays!

Our weekly litter picks continue to provide a great opportunity to walk, talk and clean up Cov! As the weather has improved so have the number of participants. It's always a great way to make a positive impact to the city as well as getting out into nature, discovering different parts of the city and connecting with people. We're still enjoying modelling our new high viz jackets which has resulted in a positive reaction from the public with lots of appreciation for the work we're doing.



We meet every **Friday 10am at the Canal Basin Steps** and spend an hour or so helping to keep Coventry clean and getting our steps in at the same time! It's a brilliant way to get out and about and meet new people, whilst doing your bit for the community. Come along and give it a go!

Connecting to Coventry

Chat Central were delighted to welcome Scott Duffin, local historian and author of 'Elephants of Coventry,' to speak about the creation of his book and his passion for Coventry. He shared with participants, his story of embarking on an elephant hunt to produce a record of the hundreds of elephants across the city, including those found on buildings, bottles and bollards.

His knowledge of the city's history was evident as he proudly passed around various objects from his, 'Coventry Collection' with coins, cups and medals dating back hundreds of years. One participant said, **"I loved the elephants of Coventry talk. Not only because I learnt so much about the significance that the Elephant has, and about the numerous elephant representations around the city, but also because Scott's passion for Coventry's history was so infectious that it's given me a whole new way of looking and thinking as I walk around the city. Thank you, Scott, and thank you Chat Central."**



CONNECTING TO OUR CITY - VIA HISTORY

Neil Catley also joined us to share his story of how taking up photography helped him when he was anxious and unable to leave the house. Neil has attracted the attention of many with his beautiful images of Coventry and has set up his own group, 'Confidence Through Photography,' which aims to help those with mental health issues to meet up with others, develop their creative skills and build confidence. Following a talk, which show cased his work, Neil led the Chat Central group on a walk around the city, offering tips and advice as we photographed historic buildings and landmarks.



CONNECTING TO OUR CITY VIA PHOTOGRAPHY

Chat Central enjoyed the Peace Picnic at Coventry's Peace Orchard to commemorate 80 years since the D-Day Landings. A time to reflect and say thank you to those who have died for peace. We were entertained by Vintage Celine Rose, Christopher Sidwell and the students from Cardinal Newman School. Later, Chat Central spent time exploring the orchard with Lady Godiva.



Pool Meet Ups and Darts Nights

We continue to meet regularly for pool sessions at Rileys Sports Bar. This is a super relaxed and friendly group, providing an ideal environment for both beginners and pool-pros to enjoy a game together. If you fancy joining us for a few games of pool and a free tea, coffee or lime soda, come along to our **next pool meet up at Rileys on Tuesday 24th September 2-4pm**. We've also had a lot of fun playing Digi Darts at Rileys. It was great to get together with a bunch of friendly people for a fun evening out.

Goodbye and Goodluck Hayley!

We were sad to say goodbye to Hayley who had been leading the pool meet ups but is about to start her master's degree in 'Applied Theatre' whilst continuing the amazing work she does with Underground Lights (more details of their incredible work below!).

Thank you to Hayley for helping to create such a welcoming group for our pool meet ups. We will miss you!



Mission Possible: Clothing Coventry

Chat Central encourages participants to take part in group volunteering sessions to see what volunteering roles are available throughout the city. In May, we visited the city's clothing bank in Hillfields, Clothing Coventry, to help sort bags of donations. Our participants worked alongside other volunteers checking clothes and organising items into sizes and sections which can then be given out. As a result of this group volunteering experience, Michael is now a regular volunteer with Clothing Coventry and a valued member of the team there.



Taster Sessions in Tennis and Bowls

Chat Central always aims to introduce participants to groups and clubs with affordable opportunities that they can go on to attend independently. In July, we visited The Avenue Bowls Club in Coundon for a taster session. For many of us it was our first time playing bowls, but we soon got into the swing of things. As with all Chat Central events, the sessions were free, and all equipment was provided. Everyone at the club was incredibly welcoming and shared their knowledge of the sport with us along with a chat over coffee and cake in the club house afterwards. One participant has been back for additional taster sessions with the club and plans to join them. Mark told us, **“It is good exercise, and I have really enjoyed myself. Also, it is an opportunity to meet new people.”**



Chat Central also took participants to Spencer Park for a series of tennis sessions. Our wonderful coach Collen offered words of advice and encouragement as we practised our rallies and serves. It was lots of fun and many of the participants are planning to return. Poornima said, **“It was not just a tennis session for me. It made me come out of the house. I was feeling lonely at home and was not participating in other gatherings, but tennis is my passion. It dragged me to come out of loneliness. Thank you so much for this opportunity.”**

Underground Lights Show and Open Mic at St. Mary's Guildhall



What a magical evening we enjoyed at Coventry's beautiful St. Mary's Guildhall, which was the inspiration for many poems, songs, raps and short dramas. There was laughter and tears and the way in which the Underground Lights Theatre Group had reflected on the rich history of the medieval building and its importance in the city's history was incredible. We saw knights, nobles, kings, queens and Lady Godiva all brought to life. Following the first part of the show there was a chance for the audience to get involved in the 'Open Mic' section and we were delighted to see some of our Chat Central participants take to the stage. Starco Rose shared one of her own songs with us and told us afterwards, **“I had fun performing it was a great experience to be part of and I felt good, like my favourite quote says, ‘Be yourself. Be unique. Be a monster!’”** Well done to everyone who was part of such a wonderful show!

Chat Central Gets Busy during Volunteers' Week

During Volunteers' Week we visited Team Springboard to lend a helping hand in their allotment, learning all about the fruits and vegetables they grow there as well as shifting compost, watering plants and sorting seeds.

Later in the week we visited CROW recycling, to help create their new community garden. We helped to move 2 tonnes of soil into the raised beds and planted cauliflowers, cucumbers and chillies. There was a great sense of pride and achievement at the progress that we made, just in the few hours we were there. Both are great places to reconnect with nature and work alongside others to make a positive difference.



Volunteers' Week was also the perfect opportunity to say a huge thank you to our amazing volunteers who help at Chat Central. Many are past participants who now use their skills to lead activities, give their time to support at sessions, serve refreshments, distribute flyers and help wherever they can. We really couldn't do it without them!

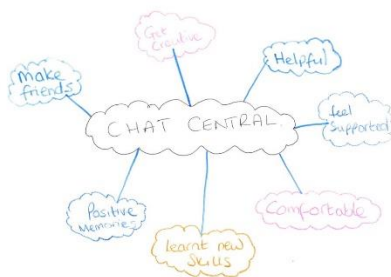
Canoeing on Coventry Canal

We had great fun canoeing at Coventry Canal Basin with Merica Canoe Club. Whilst it might not be the first place you'd think of to go canoeing, the club has been based here since the 1980s and as well as kayaking and canoeing they also offer paddleboarding. The members were supportive, encouraging and made us all feel safe and happy to give it a go. After a short instruction we were soon rowing up and down the canals and made our way towards the Daimler Powerhouse, passing ducks and fishermen along the way. One participant loved it so much that he has returned to the club independently. Ray told us a few weeks later, **'I went kayaking today. Thank you so much for introducing me to this past time. I love it!'**



Celebrating Chat Central

In July we held our Chat Central Celebration at the Priory Visitor Centre which welcomed back participants, staff and session leads from the past few years. It gave everyone the chance to share their feelings and memories about Chat Central and to reflect on the long-lasting positive impact that it has had.



Sylvia **How Chat Central has helped me** Thursday 18th 2024

My Story

You can make some one to come to the group. You also have a cup of tea. You also have a cup of tea. You also have a cup of tea. You also have a cup of tea.

Chat Central is a great place. It helps you to be confident in yourself. You also get a chance to do volunteering work. You get to meet new people. You get to talk to others telling them what's all about!

Chat Central give you a chance to be yourself. They encourage you to take up volunteering work that will help us in our day to day life. And something to put on our CV in the future.

Talking to each other helps us in our day to day life. How was your week?

- How I have gained as a Chat Central Volunteer!**
- * Bigger smile
 - * met loads of good people
 - * learnt much from others
 - * Enjoyed activities
 - * more confidence

It was also a wonderful chance to socialise over a samosa whilst listening to the wonderful music of Paul Quinn who did an amazing job entertaining us in the glorious sunshine. Thank you so much for all your wonderful feedback on the day and messages of thanks that followed. One participant wrote, **“I just want to say thank you to you and the team for a wonderful evening. I absolutely loved the singer in the courtyard, it was a brilliant end to the evening. Thanks a million.”**



COMING UP IN SEPTEMBER...

Thurs 5 th September	2:00 – 4:00pm	Songwriting with John	United Reformed Church, Warwick Road CV1 4DX	FREE
Fri 6 th September	10:00 – 11:30am	Mission Possible: Pick 'n' Mix. City walk + Litter-picking	Meet at the Canal Basin Steps CV1 4LW	FREE
Sun 8 th September	11:00am – 4:00pm	River Festival A celebration of our city's river, community, art and nature hosted by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust	FarGo Village Far Gosford Street CV1 5ED Meet at entrance to FarGo on Far Gosford Street at 11am and/or 1pm	FREE
Weds 11 th Sept	2:00 – 4:00pm	Games in the Park (e.g. bowls, football) Feel free to bring an outdoor game.	War Memorial Park Kenilworth Road CV3 6PT Meet at the War Memorial Monument	FREE
Fri 13 th Sept	10:00 – 11:30am	Mission Possible: Pick 'n' Mix. City walk + Litter-picking	Meet at the Canal Basin Steps CV1 4LW	FREE
Sat 14 th Sept	12:30 – 1:30pm	Streets of Cov Fest - Imagineers Festival Black Victorians dance performance	Coventry Cathedral Ruins CV1 5AB Meet at the steps to the new Cathedral	FREE
Sat 14 th Sept	2:30 – 3:30pm	Heritage Open Day at the Weaver's House	121 Upper Spon Street Spon End CV1 3BQ	FREE
Tues 17 th Sept	5:15 – 6:30pm	Badminton taster session	Sidney Stringer Academy Primrose Hill, CV1 5LY (Meet outside Creams, CV1 5FZ)	FREE Equipment provided
Thurs 19 th Sept	2:00 – 4:00pm	Dance Energise with Mandy (seated options available)	United Reformed Church, Warwick Road CV1 4DX	FREE
Fri 20 th Sept	10:00 – 11:30am	Mission Possible: Pick 'n' Mix. City walk + Litter-picking	Meet at the Canal Basin Steps CV1 4LW	FREE
Tues 24 th Sept	2:00 – 4:00pm	Pool meetup	Rileys Sports Bar Butts Rd CV1 3JZ	FREE
Fri 27 th Sept	10:00 – 11:30am	Mission Possible: Pick 'n' Mix. City walk + Litter-picking	Meet at the Canal Basin Steps CV1 4LW	FREE



Facebook is a great way to stay up to date with Chat Central activities. Check out videos to find out more about our [Friday walks](#) and [how the whole project works](#).

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/ChatCentralVAC>

SEPTEMBER 2024

At Chat Central, you will find a friendly place to:

- Make connections
- Try something new
- Get active
- Chill and watch
- Chat, share and support
- Meet up and socialise
- Get into volunteering
- Walk and explore Coventry

We offer up to 20 sessions to Coventry residents aged over 18.



Saturday 14th September 2024

IMAGINEER

12:30 – 1:30pm Streets of Cov
Black Victorians dance performance
Cathedral Ruins CV1 5AB
meet by the steps at 12:30pm

FREE

heritage open days

2:30 – 3:30pm
Heritage Open Day at
The Weaver's House
121 Upper Spon Street, CV1 3BQ
Meet outside at 2:30pm **FREE**

Tuesdays **BADMINTON ENGLAND**
17th Badminton taster session
5:15-6:30pm Sidney Stringer Academy,
CV1 5LY. (Meet outside Creams, CV1 5FZ)
FREE - equipment provided

24th Pool meet up 2:00 - 4:00pm at
Rileys, The Butts, CV1 3JZ **FREE**

Wednesday
11th Games in the Park 2:00 - 4:00pm
War Memorial Park, CV3 6PT
Meet at the monument at 2pm. Feel free to
bring outdoor games. Bring water. **FREE**

Thursdays
Give it a Go Thursdays 2:00 - 4:00pm
United Reformed Church Hall, CV1 1EX:
• 5th - Intro to Song-writing with John
• 19th - Dance Energise with Mandy
(gentle + seated options available)
FREE

Fridays
Pick n Mix - City Walk + Litter Pick
Every Friday, 10:00 - 11:30am
Meet at Canal Basin steps CV1 4LW. We
walk, we talk and we clean up Cov! **FREE**

Sunday
8th Coventry River Festival
(Warwickshire Wildlife Trust)
A celebration of Coventry's river,
community, art and nature.
11:00am - 4:00pm
FarGo Village, Far **FREE**

CHATCENTRAL@VACOVENTRY.ORG.UK
CALL: 07541 343491

**Song Writing & Sing
Along with John**



Thursday 5th Sept 2024
2:00 - 4:00 pm

The United Reformed Church Hall
Warwick Road
CV11EX

Come along, get creative and try
something new with a friendly bunch of
people. If you play an instrument, bring
it along!

FREE Hot drinks and fresh fruit.
Age 18 and over only

chatcentral@vacoventry.org.uk
Call 07541 343 491

Sunday 8th September 2024
11am - 4pm

Chat Central staff will be exploring and enjoying the River Festival. We will be at the entrance of FarGo on Far Gosford Street (CV1 5ED) at **11am** and **1pm** if you'd like to meet us there.

Immerse yourself in the celebration of our city's river, community, art, and nature.

Attendees can look forward to a variety of **FREE** activities, including theatrical performances, live music, mural painting, storytelling sessions, guided river walks, interactive crafts and workshops.



Email : chatcentral@vacoventry.org.uk
Call : 07541 343491 or 07895 450560
Open to adults (18+) living in Coventry

*Pick n'mix
Fri-yays!*

MISSION POSSIBLE



Group Volunteering
Experiences

**We walk, talk,
& clean up Cov!**

Meet us at the Canal
Basin steps CV1 4LW
Fridays
10-11.30am

We'll take a gentle walk
around the city,
litter-picking as we go!

All equipment provided



CHATCENTRAL@VACOVENTRY.ORG.UK
CALL 07541 343 491

Saturday 14th September 2024

Join us as we make the most of Coventry's Heritage Open Days & Imagineer Production's Streets of Cov festival.

We'll enjoy a dance performance in the Cathedral ruins and a visit to The Weaver's House in Spon End.

A wonderful afternoon of culture, history and heritage!

Everything **FREE** to attend!



IMAGINEER

12:30 – 1:30pm

Streets of Cov - Imagineers Festival
Black Victorians dance performance

by Jeanefer Jean-Charles

Cathedral Ruins CV1 5AB
meet by the steps at 12:30pm



2:30 – 3:30pm

Heritage Open Day at The
Weavers House

121 Upper Spon Street, CV1 3BQ
Meet outside at 2:30pm



heritage open days

Email: chatcentral@vacoventry.org.uk

Call: 07541 343 491

FREE

BADMINTON TASTER SESSION

5:15 - 6:30 pm

Tuesday 17th September 2024

Sydney Stringer Academy, CV1 5LY
Meet outside Creams on Swanswell St. CV1 5FZ at 5:15

- Open to adults (18+) living in Coventry
- Totally beginner friendly - come and have a go!
- Equipment provided
- Bring water

Email: chatcentral@vacoventry.org.uk

Call: 07541 343 491

Dance Energise with Mandy

GIVE IT A GO THURSDAYS

Thursday 19th September, 2-4pm

United Reformed Church, Warwick Row (CV1 1EX), Large Room

A gentle, dance-based exercise session.

Give your mind and body a boost by moving to some tunes!

Completely beginner friendly and seated options available.

Wear comfy clothes, drinks and fruit provided.

FREE
Just turn up!



For more info call: 07541 343 491

email: chatcentral@vacoventry.org.uk

Open to Coventry residents aged 18 and over

POOL

Meet Up

RILEYS, THE BUTTS, CV1 3JZ

2:00 - 4:00 PM

FREE GAMES

OPEN TO COVENTRY RESIDENTS AGED 18 AND OVER

TUESDAY 24TH
SEPTEMBER 2024

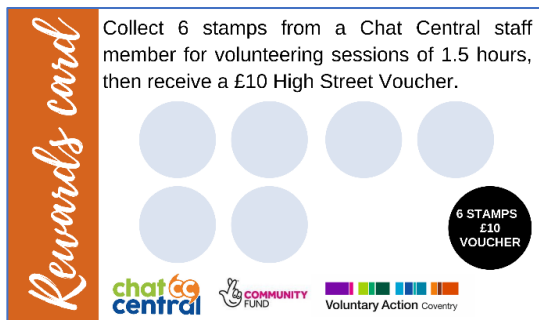
NO NEED TO BOOK, JUST COME ALONG AND ENJOY A FEW FREE GAMES OF POOL WITH A FRIENDLY GROUP OF PEOPLE.

CALL 07541 343 491

CHATCENTRAL@VACOVENTRY.ORG.UK

Volunteering with Chat Central

We are always grateful to our wonderful volunteers who help add extra quality to our sessions by sharing their skills and helping with the running of events.



If you have a skill you'd like to share at our meet ups, or if you'd like to come along to help serve refreshments and chat to people, we'd love to hear from you. If interested, please contact Celia on 07541 343 491.

Chat Central also welcomes volunteers and participants who are new to the UK and can help support and direct people to improving language skills, self-confidence and build people up to start volunteering in the community.

We pay for expenses and travel and also offer a special reward card where 6 volunteering stamps earns a High Street Voucher.

Find out more:



Call Celia (Engagement Officer)
or WhatsApp

07541 343491

Email:

chatcentral@vacoventry.org.uk

www.facebook.com/ChatCentralVAC

Chat Central are looking for volunteers...

- Are you able to help people to feel better about themselves?
- Do you like talking to people and getting involved?
- Do you accept people as they are?
- Can you put yourself in their shoes and think about their experience of life?
- Do you understand, or have you experienced loneliness, and can you relate to how it affects people?
- Can you listen well to others?
- Are you happy to work with and accept differences?
- Are you happy to work under the guidance of the Engagement Officer and buddy volunteer, following suggestions about the needs of the people we work with and health and safety issues?
- Do you value the benefits of group work, community, and how activities like crafts and hobbies bring people together and build confidence?

We are looking for people to help with leading activities such as arts and crafts, yoga, bingo.... and chatters to help people feel welcome.



Call or WhatsApp
Sarah
(Project Assistant):
07729 290317



Come along to **FREE** welcoming & fun events in Coventry. Build **confidence**, get into socialising, feel more **connected** & start **making a difference!**



CHATCENTRAL@VACOVENTRY.ORG.UK

CALL 07541 343 491

Chat Central is a project of VAC and funded by TNL



Voluntary Action Coventry

