



## Mini fundraiser Jude's sweet challenge

A day in the life:  
what our Info & Advice Officers do  
Curry up for our cook-along with  
MasterChef's Raheel

# Jude's **sweet** challenge

Meet mini fundraiser Jude Jonwood, aged 11. Each year Jude, from the West Midlands, gives up sweets during January for a charity that he feels strongly about.

This year he chose to support The Brain Charity in memory of Aida Williams, the father of his brother's school friend, who died of Motor Neurone Disease.

Jude's 'No Treats January' raised a whopping **£778.75**, including £132.75 Gift Aid, for The Brain Charity - nearly four times his original target. Well done Jude, we salute your willpower!



## Here's a wheely great opportunity to get out and about

National charity Cycling Projects have received £11,000 funding to loan The Brain Charity a fleet of 18 bikes, trikes and recumbents.

The organisation - which is currently in the process of appointing Liverpool's first Wheels for All coordinator - will train our staff, service users and volunteers how to ride on the road safely and provide buddies to carry out rides with them.

Initially there are 18 spaces on the project available. Once the first group of 18 people are trained, another 18 can begin. Cycling Projects also hope some members of TBC staff will become Wheels for All ambassadors within the charity, helping to encourage more people to get into cycling.

Are you interested in taking part?

If so, please email [tui@thebraincharity.org.uk](mailto:tui@thebraincharity.org.uk) as soon as possible.

## Be a superhero for The Brain Charity

We think everyone who fundraises for The Brain Charity is a superhero in their own right.

That's why we're one of the chosen charities for Superhero in the City and their unofficial world record attempt.

On April 28th this year, National Superhero Day, runners from all over the world will don masks & capes & take to their local parks and pavements to run, walk, jog or roll 5km in a virtual race - Superhero in the City - for their chosen charities.

Organisers need at least 1,566 people to dress up in a superhero outfit and send in a picture of themselves during their challenge to set what they believe will be a new record. Entry is free, but you can order a superhero outfit and medal online if you want to.



**So go on, release your inner superhero, and sign up for your virtual running place to support The Brain Charity today! Follow this link to sign up now: [www.bit.ly/TN21SH](http://www.bit.ly/TN21SH)**

# Curry up for our cook-along with MasterChef's Raheel

Join us for a fun, family-friendly cook-along with MasterChef's Raheel Mirza – and help to raise vital funds for The Brain Charity's COVID-19 appeal at the same time.

Raheel will host this live class from 6pm on Wednesday, April 7th, when he will teach guests how to cook a classic curry dish: Saag Paneer with Garlic Naan.



To mark World Health Day 2021, Raheel will be telling you about the brain-boosting super food powers of spinach while you cook. He'll also be showing us a vegan option with tofu too if preferred.

Tickets are just £4.99 per household/individual screen. After you purchase your ticket, you'll be sent an ingredients list for you to pick up the items required to make the dishes, and a link to join this event online using Microsoft Teams.

Cook along with us on the night, or just tune in to get some expert curry tips! Get your tickets here: [www.bit.ly/NerveCook](http://www.bit.ly/NerveCook)



## Get your views on 'life with a disability' heard

The Government is developing a National Strategy for Disabled People, which will be informed in part by a survey. This survey asks about your life experiences, either as a disabled person, a carer, parent, or as someone who has an interest in disability issues.

Anyone who is interested, whether staff, service user or volunteer, is welcome to take part. Hopefully this is a chance for us to have a positive impact on how people with disabilities are treated within society.

More information and instructions on how to take part can be found here: [www.bit.ly/TN21DS](http://www.bit.ly/TN21DS)

# 5 Five things you didn't know about music and dementia

By Kym Ward, Dementia Project Coordinator at The Brain Charity



At The Brain Charity, we know music can play a vital role in the daily care of people living with dementia - it stirs memories, reduces agitation and creates moments of joyful connection.

That's why we've launched our Music Makes Us! online therapy workshops to be shared in households and care homes all over the UK.

Sign up to the 12-week video programme here: [www.bit.ly/NerveMO](http://www.bit.ly/NerveMO) or email [kym@thebraincharity.org.uk](mailto:kym@thebraincharity.org.uk)

*Here are five facts you might not know about the relationship between music and dementia.*

1

## Have you ever heard of the 'memory bump'?

Evidence suggests that the music you enjoy and hear between the ages of 10 and 30 sticks with you. It seems that people living with dementia retain this music in their memories the clearest. This phenomenon is called the 'memory bump'!

2

## Music can reduce agitation for people living with dementia.

If you play music for 30 minutes before doing a task that a person normally doesn't like, it can reduce negative behaviour.

3

## Did you know that some people living with dementia can learn new songs?

A study found that a lady living with Alzheimer's was able to recall a brand new song she'd learnt, even 2 weeks later!

4

## Music is what's known as a 'super stimulus'.

The memory of a song might untap a feeling, time or smell that went along with it! Singing a song is possible even if a person is no longer able to speak, because music activates many connected parts of the brain.

5

## Did you know that people living with dementia can crave music?

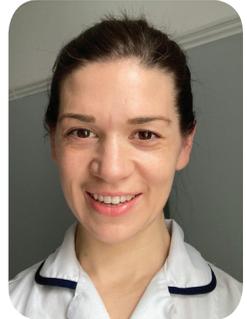
A study found that people's reward systems are activated when they listen to music, making them want more!

# British Empire Medal for our Physiotherapist

**Clare McCarroll, the community physiotherapist The Brain Charity work with on our Music Makes Us! dementia workshops, was awarded a British Empire Medal (BEM) for services to the NHS in the New Year Honours List.**

In an interview with the BBC, Clare said she was “delighted and very humble” to be recognised in this way and commended her “exceptional and hardworking team”.

Congratulations Clare. Anyone who signs up to our Music Makes Us! programme will benefit from a 1-2-1 session with Clare if they need it.



## Playing ‘My Mother’s Music’ to support people living with dementia

When the UK’s second lockdown started in October 2020, Rita Leaman sat in her cottage and thought ‘**what can I do, with what I’ve got?**’ Her thoughts turned to her mother’s 1939 gramophone and record collection, which sat in a cupboard in her home near Scarborough, North Yorks, doing nothing.

An 80-year-old living with dementia, Paul Harvey, had recently gone viral after his son Nick posted footage of the former music teacher improvising a song on his piano with just four notes.

Rita knew the value of music in memory loss as she had seen the evidence some years before with her own mother, who had vascular dementia. And so her project ‘My Mother’s Music’ was born. Twice a week, Rita plays a single from her mother’s record collection from the 1930s and 40s, records it and edits the footage before sharing to YouTube.



She hopes her project will help carers, friends and family helping people with memory loss and dementia reconnect with past times. To listen to the playlist, search ‘My Mother’s Music’ on YouTube or follow this link: [www.bit.ly/NerveMMM](http://www.bit.ly/NerveMMM)

# A day in the life of The Brain Charity's

**The Brain Charity's free helpline is open from 9am until 4.30pm Monday to Friday, and is staffed by four Information & Advice Officers.**

As The Brain Charity supports people with all forms of neurological condition – and there are more than 600 in total – requests for our help can be very varied. Staff member Vanessa kept a diary of the enquiries which came her way in a single day, to give an insight into the practical help we provide.



**9:00am**

The first call of the day came from someone wanting advice for their friend, who was struggling with cluster headaches.

The person was struggling to get a specialist in neurology since moving house, which meant the medical evidence they could give while applying for welfare benefits was limited. The caller's friend wanted to know of private neurology clinics in their area.

I investigated potential options, and the caller was delighted we could help locate these.

**9:30am**

The next caller was concerned for a family member who had been living with migraines for more than a decade. They claimed the patient's GP was not taking it seriously and had refused to make a referral to a specialist. The migraines were taking a toll on the family member's mental health and they felt they weren't getting the support they needed.

I made a referral for the patient to receive counselling from The Brain Charity to manage their mental health and learn how to cope with their condition. This was also offered for free to the caller, who showed great concern for their family member's wellbeing. Having a neurological condition not only affects the person with the condition, but anyone that cares for them and loves them too. That's why The Brain Charity offers these vital services to family members, friends and carers of the person affected as well.

I also signposted the caller to our Carers Advocacy service, who can help get their voice heard when liaising with the GP and ensure they understand their rights.

**10:45am**

An existing client got in touch to tell me they were posting their PIP form to me so I could support them with filling this in. PIP is a type of benefit given to people by the Government to help with extra costs if they have a long-term illness or disability.

Many of our service users are initially turned down for PIP as neurological conditions are invisible, and have to fight to get this overturned – often with our help. This caller struggled with fatigue, concentration, memory, pain, weakness in their limbs and numbness in their hands – making filling out a written form impossible.

**11:10am**

During a rare quiet spell, I began looking through medical evidence for someone living with a central nervous system disorder, Lupus, and Stage 4 Kidney Failure who needed to apply for PIP.

I sifted through the complex paperwork to find the most relevant information which best expressed how their condition affected them so I could include the most compelling evidence to support their PIP claim.

# Information and Advice Officers

**12:00pm**

I responded to an enquiry from someone whose family member had an acquired brain injury. ABI can increase the risk of depression and anxiety.

The caller was concerned about their family member's mental health due to the COVID-19 lockdowns and the social isolation this had caused. I told them about The Brain Charity's free counselling and telephone befriending services and social activities, all of which they could engage with virtually.



**12:30pm**

The next caller was feeling worried about how their finances would change once they reached State Pension age.

I advised the caller about how their welfare benefits might be altered and what to do next. I also told them how to maximise their income by applying for a council tax reduction on the grounds of disability.

**1:15pm**

This caller wanted to know if our counselling service was still running during the lockdowns. I was pleased to tell them The Brain Charity is currently offering counselling via telephone or video call, and that face-to-face in a COVID-safe environment is soon to return.

In-person counselling is still allowed under government regulations due to it being an essential therapy. The Brain Charity also has additional counselling places for anyone bereaved as a result of COVID-19. I logged the caller's details so they could be added to the waiting list for an appointment.

**2:15pm**

A service user had been notified their request to appeal their welfare benefits decision at tribunal had been accepted. I began writing a court submission with them over the telephone.

I had supported this caller through the entire benefits application process: from collating medical evidence to preparing them for their health assessment, submitting a mandatory reconsideration, and finally requesting to appeal the decision.

**3:30pm**

This caller sustained a brain injury at work last year and was struggling. Their GP had advised they were not qualified to explain the results of their recent CT scan. I encouraged them to ask their doctor for a second medical opinion on the CT scan to get answers.

The Brain Charity offers expert legal advice – this client already had a solicitor in place, so I advised them what to ask the solicitor to get further support.

**4:30pm**

My last call came from a community occupational therapist who needed support for someone in their care who was recovering from a stroke and trying to get back to work. Their employer hadn't offered them the same role they had been doing before the stroke.

I advised on the person's employment rights, how they could ask their employer for reasonable adjustments, and how to combat workplace discrimination. I arranged a time to call the person direct to discuss this further.

# Viktor's story: "My autism means I'm seen as weird, but The Brain Charity helps me follow my dreams"



**Viktor, 46, had always struggled to hold down jobs. He said many employers didn't understand him due to his autism, seeing him as 'weird'. Autism is a developmental disability that affects the way a person communicates. It exists on a spectrum, which about one in 100 people are on.**

Viktor, who was born in Hungary but now lives in St Helens, Merseyside, wasn't diagnosed with autism until 2019, aged 44. This was despite many people finding similarities between him and Dustin Hoffman's titular autistic character in the Hollywood film *Rain Man* since its release in 1988.

Viktor said: "I've always been able to feel my autism, I just didn't know what it was called. When *Rain Man* came out in cinemas, many friends and family pointed out that I seemed like Dustin Hoffman's character because of my memory. I could recall all the full names, dates of births and addresses of most of the people from my town. But despite that, people still didn't really know what autism was or what it meant. My behaviour isn't considered normal, and so people - especially employers - treat me as if I'm weird.

"It can be frustrating, because I've got really useful skills. I am very detail-oriented. I can pick up and remember things other people miss." Growing up, Viktor often wasn't aware of the symptoms of his autism. As a child he would hit himself - even breaking his fingers - but when teachers confronted him, he didn't know he'd been doing it.

He found out about The Brain Charity by chance in January 2020 during a visit to Liverpool Central Library, and, realising our centre was just down the road, decided to pop in straight away. Viktor started regularly coming into The Brain Charity centre for support, but these meetings were halted when COVID-19 closed the building temporarily last March. Luckily, when we quickly set up The Brain Charity's phone befriending service, matching service users with volunteers to support them with weekly telephone calls, Viktor was keen to take part.

Since then, his regular calls with volunteer Julian have helped him take steps closer to following his dream of becoming a legal liaison officer for employment disputes. Viktor said The Brain Charity's support saved him from 'desperation'.

He added: "I think my skills for picking out details could really help people who are falling through the cracks when it comes to employment tribunals - they could even save some people.

"I am proud of my abilities that come from my autism, but I'm not usually given the chance to use them. "The Brain Charity's befriending service helps me have the confidence to keep following my passions."

## Don't suffer in silence - if you're lonely, try our phone befriending service.

Thanks to an influx of fantastic new volunteers, and some additional funding, The Brain Charity has recently been able to double capacity within our phone befriending service.

Our volunteers offer weekly 1-2-1 befriending calls to chat about any topic you would like and ensure you're not left feeling alone. They can also help you set up video call software so you can join in with our online activities.

We can also provide additional support for anyone bereaved as a result of COVID-19.

If you or someone you know would benefit from this, or need any support to attend The Brain Charity's online activities, email:

**[Hannah@thebraincharity.org.uk](mailto:Hannah@thebraincharity.org.uk)**



# Five tips for finding peace at home with anxiety during COVID-19



Anxiety is a natural emotion that stems from the body's 'fight or flight' response. However, some people's anxiety makes them feel as though they are unable to cope or control their emotions. This is known as a Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD)

There are ways you can control anxious emotions at home during the COVID-19 pandemic. If you have a GAD diagnosis and are struggling with symptoms, please always consult your doctor too to see what other support is available.

## 1. Focus on breathing

Breathing increases the oxygen supply to your brain, triggering the parasympathetic nervous system and creating a sensation of calm. It also helps you to feel as though you have active control over your body.

Try visualising inhaling from your heels and imagining the airflow reaching through your body up to your mouth, before exhaling. You can learn more about calming breathing techniques in The Brain Charity's online mindfulness sessions.

## 2. Understand your limits

Everybody is different, so understanding your own limits is key to keeping calm. For example, exercise can be beneficial as it releases endorphins. But outdoor exercise isn't always accessible due to weather constraints, mobility or if you're shielding.

Luckily, there are still many forms of exercise you can do at home. Why not join The Brain Charity's online dance or activity bingo sessions? These can be easily done from a chair, so are adaptable for everyone.

## 3. Distract yourself

Pick up your favourite film, book or TV show and lose yourself. It doesn't matter if you've seen or read it a million times before. Let yourself enjoy the activity and focus on the excitement and happiness it gives you.

## 4. Visualise your feelings

Understanding the emotion itself is vital in controlling it. This can be done in a number of creative ways. Try writing down how you're feeling, by creating a mind map of the emotion including why you feel that way and what impact it has on your body. You can then link this to how you usually calm down, what works and what doesn't.

Another option is drawing or painting how the emotion makes you feel. Focus on colour and texture, play some music and start to think of this as a fun activity rather than a coping mechanism. Why not join our virtual art club too?

## 5. Reach out

Sometimes you need extra help, and that's more than okay. Reaching out means understanding things are going to get better, but you can't do it alone.

You could start by talking to family members, friends and people you trust. The Brain Charity also offers free counselling and weekly befriending phone calls. Call us: **0800 008 6417** (Monday-Friday: 9am-4.30pm) or email: **info@thebraincharity.org.uk**

# Had the jab yet?

**Coronavirus (or COVID-19) is a viral infection. It can cause permanent harm, complications, and death. COVID-19 is very dangerous for people with existing conditions, including asthma or heart problems.**



People with neurological conditions such as Parkinson's or cerebral palsy are at higher risk too. We all need to keep washing our hands, wearing face-masks, and maintaining social distancing. But the best protection for you is provided by the new coronavirus vaccines. This is known as vaccination or immunisation; or simply, the jab.

These vaccines have been developed quicker than usual because of the urgency and seriousness of the pandemic, meaning they received more funding and resources. But they are just as safe as all other vaccines - some of which you may have had already, like the seasonal flu jab - and have gone through all the usual tests.

The flu jab won't protect you against COVID-19, it's a different virus needing a different vaccine. You should still get the flu jab as well. Catching the flu won't stop you catching COVID-19 at the same time, and if you catch both, you will be at real risk of very serious complications.

Vaccines are safe. The real danger is if you don't have the vaccine. If you have the vaccine, you are much less at risk of catching coronavirus, and much less likely to pass the virus on to other people.

**The jab is free. You'll get a letter from you GP to make an appointment to take the vaccine. It's a nasty new bug. Get the jab!**

Have you been bereaved by COVID-19? We offer counselling support. Reach out if you need someone to talk to. T: 0800 008 6417 E: [info@thebraincharity.org.uk](mailto:info@thebraincharity.org.uk)

## A BOOST FOR THE UNEMPLOYED IS ON THE HORIZON

We're delighted to announce The Brain Charity will soon be launching a £380,000 three-year unemployment project after successfully bidding for more European Social Fund cash.

New Horizons is an innovative project offering support to those living in the Liverpool City Region experiencing specific and multiple barriers to accessing job search, training and education opportunities. In the case of our clients, this is likely to be because they have neurological conditions. New Horizons aims to help people improve their confidence and self-esteem, help them understand the job market, give them more awareness of the ways back into employment and offer training tailored to them to help them develop their skills.

As with our Directions Project, New Horizons will be run as part of a consortium of different charities from the Liverpool City Region, overseen by The Women's Organisation. Together, both projects are expected to help hundreds of people across Merseyside back into work, education or training.

The Brain Charity will be launching New Horizons as part of a boosted employment service over the coming months. If you are interested in joining the project when it launches, email: [info@thebraincharity.org.uk](mailto:info@thebraincharity.org.uk) and find more information here: [www.bit.ly/TNhoriz](http://www.bit.ly/TNhoriz)



# ACTIVITIES ROUND-UP

## MS Teams is the future

From March 22nd, The Brain Charity's activities will be moving from Zoom to Microsoft (MS) Teams. MS Teams and Zoom are both similar group video calling platforms. If you need support with Teams, call our helpline on **0800 008 6417** (Monday-Friday: 9am-4.30pm) or email [info@thebraincharity.org.uk](mailto:info@thebraincharity.org.uk)

## Please share your thoughts

If you've attended one of our activities, we'd love your feedback. Please complete this short five-minute survey: [www.bit.ly/TNFBS](http://www.bit.ly/TNFBS)

## Upcoming activities March & April 2021

### Tea, coffee and company

First and Third Monday of the month 10:30am – 11:30am  
1st Mar, 15th Mar, 5th Apr, 19th Apr.

### Art club

Mondays 1:00pm – 2:00pm  
1st Mar, 8th Mar, 15th Mar, 22nd Mar, 29th Mar.

### Mindfulness

Mondays 2:00pm – 3:00pm  
1st Mar, 8th Mar, 15th Mar, 22nd Mar, 29th Mar, 5th Apr.

### Cosmetics workshop

Tuesdays 11:00am – 12:00pm  
2nd Mar, 9th Mar, 16th Mar.

### Get moving: virtual workout

Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays 11:00am – 12:00pm

### Online hat making

Tuesdays 1:00pm – 3:00pm  
2nd Mar, 9th Mar, 16th Mar, 23rd Mar, 30th Mar, 6th Apr,  
13th Apr, 20th Apr, 27th Apr.

### Nutrition basics for everyone

Wednesdays 10:00am – 11:00am  
3rd Mar, 10th Mar, 17th Mar, 24th Mar, 31st Mar.

### Managing stress and anxiety group sessions

Wednesdays 2 – 3:30pm.  
3rd Mar, 10th Mar, 17th Mar, 24th Mar, 31st Mar.

### Knit & natter

Wednesdays 1:00pm – 2:00pm  
3rd Mar, 10th Mar, 17th Mar, 24th Mar, 31st Mar, 7th Apr,  
14th Apr, 21st Apr, 28th Apr.

### Virtual canal walking group

Thursdays 10:00am – 11:00am  
4th Mar, 11th Mar.

### Neuro Pilates

Thursdays 2:30pm – 3:30pm  
4th Mar, 11th Mar, 18th Mar, 25th Mar, 1st Apr.

### Activity bingo

Fridays 10:00am – 12:00pm  
5th Mar, 12th Mar.

### Dance with Leila

Fridays 1:00pm – 2:00pm  
5th Mar, 12th Mar, 19th Mar, 26th Mar, 2nd Apr.

### Cook-along with MasterChef's Raheel Mirza

Fridays 2:30pm – 3:30pm  
5th Mar, 12th Mar, 19th Mar, 26th Mar, 2nd Apr.  
Plus, a public event on Wed. 7th April at 6pm.  
Get your tickets here: [www.bit.ly/NerveCook](http://www.bit.ly/NerveCook)

### Head matters tea party

This year's event, which we usually hold for Brain Awareness Week in March, is postponed until September when we hope we'll be able to meet together in person at The Brain Charity once again. Watch our social media channels for updates.

To find out more about any of the free activities above, and to sign up, please email:

[activities@thebraincharity.org.uk](mailto:activities@thebraincharity.org.uk)

If you have any problems accessing our online groups, please get in touch with our information team for help: call them free on **0800 008 6417** or email: [info@thebraincharity.org.uk](mailto:info@thebraincharity.org.uk)

For a full, up-to-date list of The Brain Charity's events visit: [www.thebraincharity.org.uk/whats-on/events](http://www.thebraincharity.org.uk/whats-on/events)

## Ways you can support us

We are very grateful for any support during these challenging times. Here are some of the ways you can help:



### DONATE ONLINE

Making a regular or a one-off donation will help The Brain Charity continue to do the amazing work it does on a daily basis. Donating couldn't be simpler. Just visit: [www.bit.ly/give2TBC](http://www.bit.ly/give2TBC) to give an amount of your choice today!

### DONATE BY TEXT

Give just £3 now by texting **BRAIN** to **70460**.

Texts cost £3 plus one standard rate message. If you'd like to give £3 but do not wish to receive any marketing communications, text **BRAINNOINFO** to **70460**.

### AMAZON SMILE

You can also choose to support us when shopping through the Amazon Shopping app on iPhone or Android or on Amazon's website - just be sure to bookmark the [smile.amazon.co.uk](http://smile.amazon.co.uk) site and use it each time you shop.



### WEBSITE SHOP

We offer all our charity-branded items for sale, from t-shirts to teas, through our online store: [www.thebraincharity.org.uk/shop](http://www.thebraincharity.org.uk/shop)

### FUNDRAISE FOR US

Many fundraising events and activities have sadly been cancelled due to COVID-19, but have you considered hosting a virtual fundraising event?

Contact our fundraising team for a virtual fundraising pack full of ideas.

Email [fundraising@thebraincharity.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@thebraincharity.org.uk) or call **0151 207 8534**

## ABOUT THE BRAIN CHARITY

The Brain Charity offers emotional support, practical help and social activities to anyone with a neurological condition and to their family, friends and carers.

For more information, contact the centre or visit our website: [www.thebraincharity.org.uk](http://www.thebraincharity.org.uk)

Connect with us:



You can also find us on: [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com) [in](https://www.linkedin.com) by searching for The Brain Charity

If you wish to be added to our mailing list, to receive news and fundraising updates including The Nerve, please go to [www.bit.ly/signupTBC](http://www.bit.ly/signupTBC) or ask our information team (on the numbers and email addresses below) to add you to the list.

The Brain Charity, Norton Street, Liverpool L3 8LR

Tel: **0151 298 2999** Helpline: **0800 008 6417**

Email: [info@thebraincharity.org.uk](mailto:info@thebraincharity.org.uk)

The Nerve is available in large text on request and as a PDF on The Brain Charity website:

[www.thebraincharity.org.uk](http://www.thebraincharity.org.uk)

The Brain Charity is registered as a charity (No: 1114999) and a company limited by guarantee in England and Wales (No: 5741930)