

AGE UK GLOUCESTERSHIRE'S VIBRANT UKULELE GROUP

BY Stephen Moore

Age UK Gloucestershire has run a successful, vibrant and confidence building Ukulele group, once a week at its Gloucester office for the last 15 months. The Group made its first public appearance, performing for a group of care home residents and visiting nursery children.

I manage the Age UK Gloucestershire part of the British Red Cross led Gloucester Life Changes project, a project that initially envisaged providing one to one support to Gloucester over 60's at times of life change, that might include bereavement or a diagnosis of an illness. As the project developed, we began to appreciate that many people would prefer the opportunity to access social opportunities, peer to peer support and activity, over being assessed and supported on a one to one basis.

As a former Activity Coordinator in a care home, I had played a Ukulele and sang with residents and this had, generally, a very positive benefit for those who listened and sang along.



We bought four Ukuleles so that new members could try before they buy. We now have about 10 people who attend regularly and two brilliant volunteers, Neil and Jim. Jim has made custom music sheets that we can project onto our boardroom white board and Neil has led the group each week with his good humour, knowledge and patience.

Neil joined us following support from our Information and Advice team who helped him get his Attendance Allowance and apply for a Disabled Driving Badge. When Neil completed his feedback form, he mentioned that he would like to share his Ukulele skills.

Ellie, a young volunteer, who has gone on to train as an accountant, also enjoyed helping the group for many months and is still missed!

Jim has provided so much expertise and encouragement. Without his help, the group would not have started.

Playing a Ukulele is relatively easy though playing it well takes commitment and time. Older people, like Paul, Pearl and Gillian, our newest recruits have taken to the instrument very well. Gillian said one morning recently, "This is my happy Hour". Paul, who used to play football locally, has found a new interest after being introduced by Pearl

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