Listening Post
counselling & training

Listen in

Issue 04

News & updates

Autumn 2026

Welcome

...to your fourth issue of *Listen in*, Listening Post's biannual round-up of recent news, views and opportunities that we'd love to share with you, our friends and supporters. We are so grateful to have your eyes and ears, and we hope you enjoy this latest edition!

35 Years of Listening Post!



We held our **AGM** with a touch of style this year, in a wonderful celebration with friends and members to mark 35 years of Listening Post. On 13th July, around 50 people who have been a part of the charity's journey gathered at Llanthony Secunda Priory, Gloucester, to enjoy a time of reflection on the past, thankfulness for the present, and the sharing of hopes and dreams for the future.



There was opportunity to remember those who have given so much of themselves over the years, look back at memories and significant milestones. We heard from former Trustee, Rosie Clifford, as she spoke passionately about her experience volunteering with Listening Post. We were also privileged to hear first-hand from some of our recent clients, who bravely shared their experiences of accessing our service and what the charity means to them. After over two decades of service as a Trustee, we also said a **grateful goodbye to Alastair Sammon** as our Chair, as he steps down for a well-earned rest.

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35 Years of Listening Post

We ended the evening by taking a look at our priorities for the next five years, as our leadership team work hard on developing our **new five-year strategy**, which will guide the organisation through an important time of adaptation in light of recent pressures on funding and demand.

But, of course, no celebration is complete without **cake!** So in typical Listening Post fashion, the evening's high point was digging into a very delicious cake, which was lovingly made by our own CEO, **Linda Bullock**, and beautifully decorated by **Jacqui Gill.**





Thank you very much to everyone who joined us for a heart-warming evening, and to all of those who have shown their support to us over the years.
We couldn't have made it this far without you!

2025-26 Annual Report: Key Highlights

9,967
counselling sessions delivered*

75.1%
reduced depression symptoms

72.5%
reduced anxiety symptoms

460
new people seen by our service

42
students completed an accredited course

*our highest *ever* number

New Appointments at Listening Post

We recently added some new roles to our core staff team.



Lara Carruthers joins Listening Post for the first time as our new Finance Assistant, working for us part-time alongside our Finance & IT Officer, Daniel Whisson, based at our main Gloucester office. Lara is a trained bookkeeper and is also passionate about dogs. Alongside Listening Post, she works a local Adoption Coordinator for rescue dogs, helping them find forever homes.



Fiona Hall, who has been a course tutor and supervisor with us for many years, has been appointed as our new Training Manager. Fiona is particularly looking forward to expanding and strengthening our training provision, exploring new opportunities that best meet the needs of the community. Alongside this role, Fiona will continue teaching our Level 4 Counselling course two days a week.

We're delighted to have you both with us!

Remembering Tony Solomon



Everyone has been shocked and saddened by the death of our much-loved Trustee and friend, Tony Solomon. After a short stay in hospital, Tony passed away on 8th May 2026.

Though only serving with Listening Post for a short time, Tony's enthusiasm, wisdom and kindness deeply touched us and left a lasting impact on our work at Listening Post. He was known locally for his long-standing commitment to church and civic life in Cheltenham, where he co-founded local charity Fresh Hope and chaired the board of Trustees at St Michael's Cornerstone Trust.



Some of our board and senior leadership team attended Tony's thanksgiving service at Holy Apostles' Church, Cheltenham, on 27th May. Our ongoing prayers and love go out to Ann, his wife, and two grown-up children Claire and Peter, as they continue to grieve and adjust.

Community Fundraising

It's been a fabulous few months for community fundraising, and we are immensely grateful to the individuals and groups who have gone out of their way to complete a challenge or host an event to raise funds for us. Every penny raised goes towards enabling people to access life-transforming counselling.

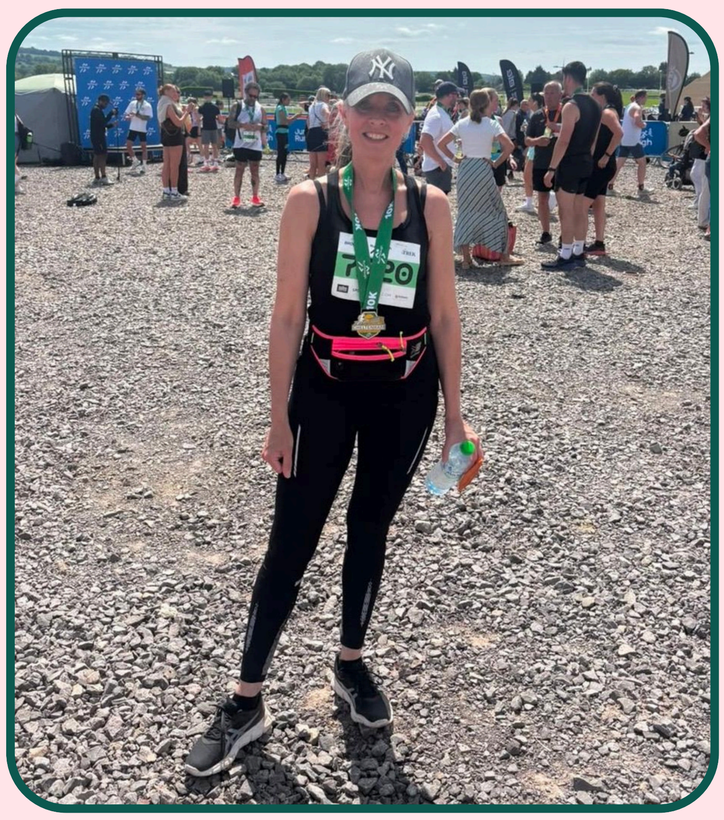
At the end of **May**, the village of **Highnam** near Gloucester came together to host a community **Open Gardens** weekend. By opening 11 gardens to the public, serving refreshments, selling plants and a prize raffle, the event raised **over £4,000 which was shared evenly between Listening Post and Highnam Church.**

Also in May **Sue Stockard**, from Kemble, hosted a **coffee morning** in aid of Listening Post. Baking a delicious array of homemade cakes, Sue raised an incredible **£200** for us in just one morning. You're a Sue-perstar!



Above: Jacqui Gill providing information at Highnam Open Gardens.

In **June,** one of our wonderful volunteer counsellors, **Nicky,** set herself the challenge of running the **10k race** at Cheltenham Running Festival with some of her colleagues. She raised **over £200** for us and faced the additional challenge of battling the intense heat on race day. A huge well done, Nicky!





Above: Nicky after her race. Left: The Highnam Open Gardens team relaxing after a smashing weekend!

Through a series of events across June and July, ***SJPride*, St James' Place LGBTQ+ network**, **raised £1,074** in donations towards our work! *SJPride* run an annual fundraiser for a local charity during Pride, and were really touched that they chose Listening Post this year. We were impressed by the creativity of the events that took place, which included a Virtual Drag Bingo and Local Lesbian Poetry evening with a raffle. A huge thank you to everyone at St James' Place who donated and took part – we really hope you enjoyed the experience and won some great prizes!





Above and left: St James' Place team members (both human and canine!) creatively celebrate and fundraise during Pride month.

When community members volunteer to fundraise, it means that we can dedicate more of our time and funds to supporting people. ***Could you or your group organise an event or take on a new challenge for us?***

Recent feedback from our clients

"I'm so glad that I persevered with my counselling even though it was very tough at times I feel that I went on a personal journey with her and she was paramount in my slow recovery process from childhood trauma. I would definitely recommend listening post to anyone seeking counselling. I can't thank Listening Post enough for helping me."

"[My counsellor] listened without judgement, helped me see what really mattered to me, and taught me how to set boundaries and speak about my struggles more openly. I truly don't know how I would have got through that time without her support. Thank you so much.

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“Thank you so much for providing this service. I believe it made a real difference to offer a “pay as much as you can afford“ approach. I developed a really positive relationship with my counsellor, who supported me through a really difficult period. She gave me the space I needed to talk and listened non-judgmentally, and I still bring to mind her advice every day months later.

Lived Experience Spotlight



Many of our own staff and volunteers have their own personal experiences of mental health challenges, trauma, neurodiversity, accessing counselling and needing support. This greatly motivates the much of work that they do with us. This regular new feature for Listen In will spotlight some of these key experiences from different team members, shared in their own words.

My Eating Disorder Battle

with Rachel Cross, our Fundraising and Communications Manager



I grew up in the local town of Cirencester and my experience of accessing counselling with partner charity, *Cotswold Counselling*, was fundamental in helping me to recognise what I was struggling with and to seek specialist support.

My counsellor was very astute and recognised that I wasn’t just experiencing generalised anxiety, but the symptoms of an eating disorder. By helping me get referred to the local eating disorders team, I was formally diagnosed with anorexia nervosa in 2010. Unfortunately, I then spent a lot of my latter teenage years in and out of services and hospitals, but through the unwavering support of several professionals and loved ones, I finally enjoyed an almost completely eating disorder-free recovery for a few years.

But it was a combination of an incredibly stressful internship, poor housing situation and an unhealthy relationship that sadly culminated in a relapse in 2020 - not so coincidentally - around the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Things declined rapidly during the first lockdown, and my friends urged me to refer myself back into services, which I eventually did, despite the shame I felt.

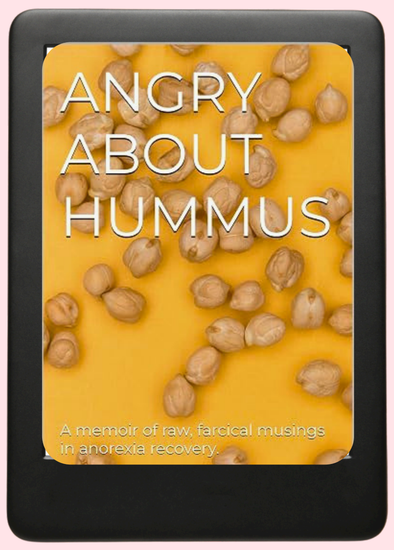
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Six years on, I still struggle with an eating disorder and attend support through my local NHS Trust in Worcestershire. Though I've made a lot of progress since that relapse, I battle the voice of the "woman upstairs" on a daily basis. For me, this takes the form of a lot of 'food rules' - which lead to distressing feelings when I don't follow these rules. For example, I have 'safe' numbers of things that I'm allowed to eat - my safe numbers are often prime numbers or multiples of prime numbers! In social situations, I will often be mentally counting how many crisps, nuts or grapes I have eaten - though it wouldn't necessarily be obvious to those around me!

With eating disorders, its important to remember that the relationship with food is only a surface-level symptom of deeper emotional challenges. However someone's disordered eating manifests - whether it be restricting, bingeing, making oneself sick, and/or exercising or something else - it's almost always a way of trying to cope with emotional distress. It's not always obvious what this might be, but good therapy combined with appropriate nutrition can help identify root causes of problems and then support you to find healthier ways of dealing with this pain. There's no set timeline for this either. I personally made a breakthrough earlier this year - after over fifteen years! As a result, I'm soon starting some more specialised dialectical behavioural therapy (DBT) which I've never accessed before.

Despite my experiences and ongoing challenges, I am proud to have built a full and independent life. I've got two psychology degrees and love my career in fundraising - supporting both Listening Post and many other charities through my other role as a consultant. Outside of work I'm a proud cat mum, member of a local church and volunteer, and I love traveling to different countries whenever I get the opportunity. **But none of this would have been possible without the support of many professionals, friends and family - and sometimes even the kindness of strangers.**

A few years ago, I published an e-book, based on a series of blog posts I wrote whilst in the depths of my eating disorder in 2020-2022. The title, ***Angry about Hummus***, is available on Amazon Kindle and linked here. Proceeds from any sales over the next six months will be donated to Listening Post.



I'm not a counsellor or trained mental health professional, but if my experience has resonated with you and you'd like to get in touch, you are welcome to email me at fundraising@lpost.org.uk for a friendly chat.

However, if you are concerned that you or someone else might be struggling with an eating disorder and needs help - please seek advice from your GP, or speak to your counsellor if you are currently in sessions.

Leaving a Gift in Your Will



Leaving a gift to Listening Post in your Will enables you to pledge your support for the future of Listening Post, even if you are unable to give financially right now. Your legacy could be a helping hand for those who are hurting when you can no longer be there for them.

There are different types of legacy gifts, but no pledge is too small. Please take a look at our linked **Legacy Giving Brochure** for more information on this type of support.

For Churches & Prayer Partners



We are hugely grateful to the churches, individuals and groups who pray for Listening Post. Though no longer faith-based in operation, we continue to be grounded upon the Christian principles on which we were founded and these principles guide our leadership direction and decision-making. This season, please pray for:

- **Leadership transitions and new trustees:** Following the loss of Tony and Alastair's resignation, please pray for the board of trustees as they steer the charity into its next phase. Please pray for Ron Storey as he steps into the role of chair. We also appreciate prayer for the recruitment of new trustees, as we seek to broaden the skillsets and diversity represented on our governance.

- **New locations:** We are currently scoping out a number of new areas in which there is a local need for more accessible counselling. These include Tewkesbury and other parts of the Forest Of Dean. As we explore financially viable options for embedding counsellors in these new areas, please pray for wisdom for our clinical team and for the right opportunities and partners to come forwards.

Listening Post is always looking out for new partnering churches to support our work in prayer and financially, and we can also offer local churches our speakers and training opportunities. If your church might be interested in exploring this, we'd love to hear from you!

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