

VOLUNTEER AWARENESS RAISING EXPERIENCES

EDINBURGH

The Edinburgh team reached out to their community through regular awareness stands in local supermarkets, shopping centres and hospitals. Marie led the team's awareness activities as they found it easier to have one point of contact with the rest of the team contributing and supporting Marie. Here's what Marie says about having great awareness in your area.



Every 4 - 6 months I make a list of all the hospitals, shopping malls and supermarkets and send a Crohn's & Colitis UK headed letter to each store manager. I usually look up their name on the store's website which I think helps a lot as they know that you have done your 'homework'. Some stores have Community Champions who you can also contact.

I also contact Patient Information Centres at Local Hospitals, get their number and call whoever I need to speak too. I always do these Awareness Days on Clinic Days as I find it best to be in the busier areas of the hospitals to reach as many people as we can. I find the awareness stands very successful.

It's great that we get donations, but I also feel that just being out in the community helps. The feedback from people who pop by the stand is that they are very grateful that we are out and about talking about Crohn's and Colitis. It helps them know they aren't alone.

Marie's top tips for organising awareness events:

- Always be professional and pleasant, and let people know that you cannot answer medical questions but signpost to Crohn's & Colitis UK's support services.
- Always send a thank you letter back to the stores to tell them how much money you raised and how successful the day was.
- Try to organise stands in stores and centres on weekends as it is busier, and you might get more help from volunteers.
- Our network bought a fold up table and fire resistance cloth, so we don't have to rely on them getting us a table.

BRIGHTON AND WEST SUSSEX

Paul from our Brighton & West Sussex team, who regularly raise awareness by joining in pre-organised events. He explains below.



At the Brighton Marathon we set up a cheer point with banners and balloons along the road. We did the same for a local 8K run for which Crohn's & Colitis UK was the chosen supported charity. Here we had a stall at the finish line and helped hand out the water bottles which gave us a great chance to talk and direct people to our stall. The third event was at the American Express building in Brighton where we teamed up with IBD Relief and spent the day raising awareness to the staff.

The team enjoy getting out and talking to other people about Crohn's and Colitis because if we can inform or point the person in the right direction then it's been a good day. A lot of people that visit us are newly diagnosed (or know someone just diagnosed) and the thanks you get when you explain and show them that there is light at the end of the tunnel and help is available is amazing, it's what keeps us doing more and more.

Paul's top tips for organising awareness events:

- Depending on the length of the event you may need to take shifts between people so make sure you have enough volunteers available.
- Take pictures for social media and future newsletters (make sure you get permission from anybody in the picture first).
- All events require a different approach depending on the audience so make sure you have the correct leaflets available.

LEEDS AND DISTRICT

Our Leeds & District Network took part in the 'Do Good Mash-Up' event at Leeds Beckett University by running an awareness stand. The event was for the new intake of students to get involved with charities in the Leeds area and encourage volunteering. They told us more, below.

We had a stall decked out with Crohn's & Colitis UK banners and leaflets to spread awareness of our network within the student community. It was good to talk in more depth to the students and staff who showed an interest in volunteering and take their details for the volunteering team to follow up. Some of them did know of Crohn's & Colitis UK and the conditions as they were patients themselves or had family or friends who were. We organised a fun and interactive game on our awareness stand to encourage people to come and chat with us - 'The Toilet Roll Challenge' - and the aim was to stack as many toilet rolls in 30 seconds and get to the top of the leader board.



We were also interviewed by the organisers which was a great awareness piece and it was fun if a bit nerve racking too: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WcZQ5bJ-Ubg>

Leeds top tips for organising awareness events:

- It was certainly useful to be involved in a fresher orientated event, where students are new to the community and looking for opportunities to get involved in local activity. We would encourage other networks to reach out to their local universities to see if similar opportunities are available.
- Organise an interactive activity to engage people to visit your stand - you could offer a small prize for the winner.