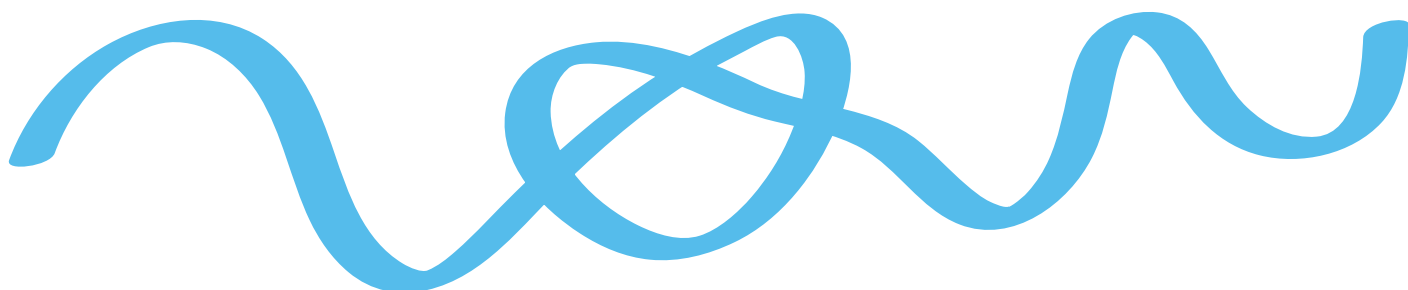




meet the team



Wayne Ruddell

“I’ve been a counsellor for four years with the lowdown and I joined because the lowdown’s philosophy and reputation made it the only place for me. I’ve met so many like-minded volunteers and the real ‘pay off’ for me is the hugely rewarding experience of seeing young people making positive, life-changing decisions. I’ve worked with many young people with a huge range of issues from self-harming to anger management, bullying, sexuality, addiction and low self-esteem and all said that our service has changed their life for the better.”

Kismet Yildirim

“Volunteering with the lowdown makes me appreciate my own life much more, makes me more understanding of other people’s situations and more empathic towards others. I wanted to be part of the fantastic service the lowdown provides. There are so many young people who just need and want to be heard. For example, I was recently able to help a young person with serious anger issues and after just a few sessions they started feeling confident and in control.”

Aidy Knight

“I started volunteering work for a sense of purpose and becoming a part of the lowdown reinforced that decision. I enjoy working with young people and supporting them to work through their issues, realisations and striving for better outcomes. When a young person doesn’t require our support anymore this feels like the biggest pay off of all. My experiences of volunteering as a counsellor at the lowdown have set a high bench mark of what appropriate support should be. I use this in many facets of my life both personally and professionally.”

Pam Shaw

“I wanted a way to use my free time constructively and gain more counselling experience, so I applied to become a counselling and information volunteer. Since the training, I know my listening and counselling skills have really improved and I feel that I want to do further study to develop my skills even more.”

Kim Attenborough

“I’ve always been interested in helping people and psychology and counselling, so I find being a lowdown volunteer counsellor is really interesting and rewarding for me. I meet great people and the skills I have learnt also benefit my paid job. One young person I supported had so many serious problems at home and just couldn’t talk about them to begin with, but over time I was able to support them to open up and eventually take the action they felt they needed to make their situation better.”

Dawn Wright

I started out as a volunteer as I wanted to help young people after seeing a lot of homelessness whilst living in London. I initially trained as a lowdown counsellor in 1993 and then got involved in raising the profile and funds of the agency. From various events including fashion shows and club nights with top celebrity acts, to getting the lowdown onto BBC1’s flagship garden show “Groundforce”, where Alan Titchmarsh and his team came to make over the buildings courtyard garden. My current role includes overseeing all the day to day activity of the agency, co-ordination and delivery of our training and outreach programme and the continual work of profile and fund raising. I also have the privilege of delivering the counselling, information and advice training to all of our new volunteers and seeing them blossom and grow. This is a humbling and amazing experience for me as I get to witness and experience the personal journeys of those who receive the training. I really enjoy working at the lowdown and the rewards that working with and supporting young people brings. I would encourage others to get involved, as working here has made a positive difference to my life.

Leila Cox

“I’m much happier now that I can give my free time to help young people and being a volunteer counsellor has really opened my eyes and improved my listening skills. I recently helped a young person with factual information about safe sex. When they came into the lowdown they were really embarrassed and concerned, but they left much happier and more confident. When I help someone I find it makes me feel better and more confident in myself.”

Rachel Welsh

“Because I’m a volunteer counsellor with the lowdown, I was able to work with a young person I met through my paid work, who was really struggling with their shyness and didn’t feel they could go anywhere to ask for help. I supported them to develop the courage and strength to finally come to see a counsellor at the lowdown and make full use of the service. My volunteering has benefited me personally as I’ve become more aware of my listening and empathy skills and I find I’m using them daily with family and friends.”

Tony Butcher

“I visited the lowdown as part of some research for my social work course and was struck by the welcoming, safe, accessible and relaxed atmosphere; I thought this was ideal for young people to get the support they needed. I wanted to be part of that so applied to become a volunteer. I joined to help young people - but being part of a caring and professional team has also helped me both professionally and personally, especially the lowdown’s counselling training.”

Sam Charlton

“I decided to volunteer as a counsellor for the lowdown because of the help I received when suffering from depression. To be given the chance to explore issues in a safe, confidential and open environment is a very rare thing especially for young people and can be very constructive. I’ve found that the skills developed through the counselling training and the tools used in the counselling room transfer readily to the real world. Communication skills, patience and analytical skills are key.”

Becky Hughes

“I enjoy volunteering and working with young people to help them with any issues or concerns they have. I also enjoy working as part of such a friendly committed team. Professionally it has benefited me as I am now considering going back to university to study counselling.”

Abbie Ramsay

“I’ve only just joined as an information and advice worker. I wanted to work with young people and give something back to the community, and I’m really looking forward to helping support the young people that use the lowdown.”

Ellie Blackwell

“I became a counselling volunteer with the lowdown as I wanted to change myself and help young people. In one of my first sessions, I supported a lad who was very confused and anxious about his relationship with his partner. When he started to open up and discuss the situation and discovered what he could do about it, he instantly became more settled and calm. He added at the end of talking to me that he thought it was really helpful to speak to someone who wasn’t involved in the situation.”

Hannah Martin

“I’m currently studying at the University of Northampton and was first attracted to the position of counselling volunteer as I thought it would be a challenge and good for my CV. As I progressed through the counselling training, I realised the personal benefits of fulfilling such a position and the emphasis changed to a personal enjoyment of the role. I feel that the skills learnt during the training at the lowdown have really empowered me to help myself a lot more, which in turn helps me to pass this on to help others.”

Richard Fawcett

“I’m a fundraising volunteer. I’ve organised 3 events to date and I have also started up and manage the online charity shop www.auctions4thelowdown. Fundraising for the lowdown allows me to utilise my organisational skills to support the best young people’s support service in Northampton and surrounds. I have gained new skills in web design, business awareness & event management. I have been offered occasional work as a result of referrals from the fundraising work I have done. This has given me the belief that I could be successful within either events management or web design in a paid employment capacity, which I am now working towards.”

Douglas Killeya

“A friend pointed out an advert for training to become a volunteer counsellor at the lowdown. Remembering the complete lack of advice and support available when I experienced difficulties in my teenage years, I thought it was worth seeing if I had the stuff to become an Information & Advice or Counselling volunteer. I hope my engagement with the young people who use the service is of value to them and is a positive part of their walk in life. I had often thought I should be doing something, but never got round to it. Now I am doing something rather than thinking about it. I feel personally better for that.

Rob Marriot

“I’ve always had an interest in people which as time went on became a desire to help. I heard about the lowdown and found it gave me the opportunity to put the interest into action. At the time I felt that if I could be of help to even just one person and help them make a positive difference to their life, all the time and effort would be well worth it. I enjoy helping people to change negative feelings to positive beliefs and hope. And help people get to where they want to be. I also have the unexpected bonus of meeting and making some great friends through the volunteers and staff.”

Mark Cook

“I became a volunteer because I wanted to help an organisation that puts young people at the heart of all they do. I enjoy my variety of roles within the agency. I’m a volunteer representative on the management committee, a fundraiser and information worker. I believe my volunteering experiences keep me up to date with the needs of young people. I have also found a great amount of friendship from other members of the team.”

John Toby

“I have been a trustee for three years and since September 2008 I have been chairman of the Management Committee. I learned about the lowdown when I was a GP in Northampton and was grateful for its work with young people. When I had some spare time (in part retirement) I wanted to try to help it in its work. Because of my role, my rewards come mainly from bringing people together to develop the lowdown. I have found continuing interest, stimulation and comradeship from my time volunteering for the lowdown. I feel I have been able to keep in touch with people and the world outside more as well as such practical things as keeping up my IT skills.”

Alina Lawrenson

“Originally I became a volunteer for the lowdown to gain some voluntary work experience whilst completing my Social Work degree and I also wanted to meet new like-minded people. I have encountered many rewarding situations. One of the most rewarding was when I offered some guidance and support to a young expectant mother, who was having a really tough time. I feel that the lowdown has given me an insight into some of the experiences and challenges that young people are faced with, this has guided me in my professional work with young people. Personally I feel that the Lowdown has increased my confidence and has showed me that I have control over my life choices and can develop and achieve anything I put my mind too.”

Kathy Gordon

“I began volunteering as a counselling and information worker in 1993 as I believed that young people rarely had the support, encouragement and safe space to develop effective coping mechanisms in the various situations life presents them with. I loved the lowdown’s ethos and the collective dedication of all those involved working alongside young people to help them discover the resources to empower themselves. I was employed by the lowdown in 1994 to manage the counselling and information service and to develop our link project in schools which involved training students to be peer mentors. My current role involves all aspects of the in-house service delivery from training and supervising the volunteers to managing the shift during our opening hours. I have been privileged to meet and work alongside some of the most amazing people who never fail to impress me with their dedication to both young people and the lowdown as an organisation.”