

Please accept my testimonial for our Digital Apprentice Beth Bretherton who joined our Team in the summer of 2022.

There are two pieces of work I will talk about that Beth has assisted with within our overall external communications function.

Your Call

We have an award-winning magazine called Your Call that is written for our stakeholders; our staff, our patients, our volunteers, our partner organisations and the public. The magazine is feature-rich and focuses on sharing news through real-life experiences, personal stories and informative articles, showcasing our amazing patients and staff to show the faces behind our organisation.

I am responsible for the magazine. We produce four editions per year and most members of the team contribute to the editorial by drafting one or two stories per edition. Beth approached me asking if she could develop her writing skills and so I invited her to the magazine's editorial group that meets monthly, which Beth is now part of, and regularly comes up with potential ideas for stories.

In Beth's time in her role, she has been assigned two stories; one which focussed on one of our paramedics Yvette, and her story of caring for her disabled son, and the other about Bonfire Night and how people have been injured by fireworks.

With the first story concerning Yvette, Beth found this story idea herself through the contacts and relationships she had built, and I liked the potential of it, so we decided to pursue it. Beth explained to me that she had not done anything like this before and required support in how to approach the interview process. I gave Beth a list of potential questions and Beth held an interview with Yvette and used the questions gleaned as much information as she could. Beth said the interview went well and I know she will have been her happy and approachable self on the interview.

Beth's first draft equated to over 1000 words as I know Beth was conscious of getting all the information in there, but there is a limit of 350 words per article. Due to this, Beth was asked to cut it down which she did, but it was still over 800 words. Beth needed support with this element to reduce the story further and also required a lot of support in structuring the article, which I know Beth won't mind me saying as it was her first attempt at doing it. Together we got the article to a place we were happy with, and I think the process informed Beth as to what is involved when it comes to writing an article for Your Call.

For Beth's second article, I tasked Beth to find people who had been injured by fireworks and gave her a list of possible places to look. Beth spent time doing this and making contact with as many people as she could. Beth struggled to find a case study through no fault of her own (they are hard to come by) so whilst Beth was on leave, I drafted a short piece for the staff bulletin asking for staff to come forward if they had a relative story to share for the article. Two staff members came forward with different stories and I asked Beth to draft her interview questions which she did, and I was pleased with. Beth held her interviews and gleaned as much information as she could in a professional manner. I asked Beth to have a go at drafting the article and asked her to use what she learned in doing her first article.

The first draft of the second article was much better and the key information was included. Beth did need a lot of help and support in structuring the information, so it flowed. We again worked together and got the article to a place we were both happy with.

I have given advice and guidance to Beth on using the 'who, what, when, where and why' model of a story which Beth has agreed to practice with to make her stories flow moving forward.

Social media

We have a well-oiled process with our social media content curation which includes monthly social media meetings with key team members. Beth sits on these meetings and is an active contributor with great suggestions and ideas.

Beth has been involved in creating content for our social media channels in various ways with a lot of support and guidance from all the team either by taking a photograph and filming or drafting content and scheduling it. In terms of her writing, I can see clear improvements in the posts she creates now. Beth seems to have picked up on our language, voice and tone and has matured her style of writing to produce some good content.

Karen Parry

Communications Officer