

17 July, 2017

A walk on the wild side

After experiencing many years of mental health challenges, Charlie Wright has made a good recovery. Now he's giving something back - through his work as a local Community Peer Supporter and by fundraising for a local charity with a sponsored climb up Mount Kilimanjaro.

Charlie, who lives in Brixton, is packing his walking boots and heading to Tanzania to climb Mount Kilimanjaro in September in an attempt to raise over £1000 for local community hub, Connect & Do, where he works as a Community Peer Supporter.

The Connect & Do Space on Railton Rd is a centre of mental health and well-being for the whole local community. It is run by social care provider, Certitude, as a space where people with mental health support needs and learning disabilities can undertake activities and receive support alongside local people. As a Community Peer Supporter, Charlie is trained to help people with mental health support needs in the community, using his own lived-experience as reference.

Charlie is enthusiastic about his role and where he works:

“Connect & Do is an amazing place where no one judges you; it's like a family. You can just come and be yourself and there's no stigma about mental health or disability. I love that everyone from the local community can come here to chill – they might have mental health support need or a learning disability but they also might just live nearby and want to try something new like life drawing, sewing or gardening.

“A&E departments and GPs refer local people who have experienced a mental health crisis to Certitude's Community Peer Supporters. The support is one to one and we usually meet up with people in local cafes to talk and listen. Because we've had direct experience of this kind of issue we are able to listen with empathy and patience. I suppose we are also living proof that things do get better.”

Charlie has been planning his trip to Kilimanjaro for several months and believes journeys like this are good for his continuing good mental health:

“Travelling helps me to be organised and disciplined; the planning gives me purpose and the walking keeps me focused. I have previously trekked the Camino trail in northern Spain and I know that afterwards I felt very good about myself. Achieving these kinds of challenges are

good for self esteem. This time when I walk Kilimanjaro I will have the extra boost of knowing that I will also be raising money for an excellent local cause.”

Ends