



ARK at Egwood

Changing lives within our community

Volunteer Newsletter

July 2026

Update from Matt

As we look back on June, we'd like to say a huge thank you to all our volunteers for their hard work, enthusiasm and support. It certainly felt like a month of four seasons in one, with hot, hot sunshine, showers, wind and everything in between, but that didn't stop our amazing community from getting stuck in.

It has been an incredibly busy start to the summer here at ARK, packed with fundraising events, roadshows, courses, workshops and creative activities, including our swallow willow weaving sessions. From maintaining our growing spaces and welcoming visitors to supporting events and sharing skills, your time and dedication help make ARK the vibrant, welcoming place that it is.

Every project completed, every event supported and every hour volunteered makes a real difference. Thank you for being part of the ARK community and helping us continue to grow, connect and inspire. We look forward to seeing what the rest of the summer brings!



The ARK Bake Off is Back !

Tom, one of our creative, competitive, culinary connoisseurs and a regular ARK attendee, has challenged us to host another ARK Bake Off – and we're delighted to say it's happening!

Thursday 30th July

Around 11:00am (ish!)

Theme: Around the World

This is your chance to showcase your baking, cooking and creative skills by making something inspired by cuisines, flavours or traditions from around the globe. Whether it's a classic British favourite, an Italian treat, a French pastry, an Indian snack or a recipe from somewhere special to you, we'd love to see your creations.

Keep an eye out for our poster with full details, but in the meantime start thinking about what you might like to cook, bake or make for this exciting worldwide culinary challenge. We can't wait to see (and taste!) your entries. Happy baking!

REMINDER

Our Breast Cancer Bra Bank and the Used, for repurposing IT equipment collection box outside the kitchen are for anyone that would like to recycle rather than throw away.

Please use these. Thank you

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Armed Forces Hub

The three Musketeers Jon, Lyndsay and Dan are working very hard for our Ark Armed Forces Community. Not long now before we become the Fantastic Four again as we continue to recruit into the Mendip Armed Forces Link Worker role.

Armed Forces Week

Jon has returned fit and well and has spent a couple of days with Nigel at the National Armed Forces Covenant with many potential partner organisations.

Dan attended Taunton Flag Raising on Monday to mark the start of this celebration and we have been out and about attending events to mark the Somerset Armed Forces Days. There is one more to go on Saturday 4th July in Taunton. Please come along to say hi to us and see some of our partner organisations that support the AF community in Somerset.

Lyndsay has been working hard on relaunching our Mendip AFOS. Glastonbury is on 8th July 2026 and Frome to follow. Please see our poster in this newsletter.

Our work continues to come in steadily. Between the team, we are currently working with 136 open referrals with more coming in regularly. The main themes of our referrals continue to be isolation, mental health, homelessness, enduring illness and medical concerns.

As well as our Wednesday morning ARK AF cookouts we are mainly involved in outreach work across Somerset. If you know of anyone from the Armed Forces Community that may benefit from attending one of our outreach sessions, please check the ARK at Egwood or NHS Armed Forces Community Facebook pages, or contact the relevant link worker for dates and times.



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ARK's Growing Areas

The growing areas at ARK are looking fantastic as summer reaches its peak. The vegetables have really taken off over the past few weeks, with courgettes and squash thriving in the warm weather and broad beans producing generous harvests. The runner beans have shot skywards and are now twisting their way up the 8-foot canes, creating impressive green tunnels and promising plenty of beans to come.

Our new polytunnel is already proving its worth and has been producing an abundance of fresh salad crops. It has been wonderful to harvest crisp leaves throughout the season, and we are now eagerly awaiting the next wave of produce. The tomatoes are beginning to swell, while the aubergines, sweet peppers and chillies are all growing strongly in the heat of the tunnel. Alongside these favourites, there are plenty of other crops developing nicely, and we are excited to see the tunnel reach its full productive potential over the coming weeks.

The sweet peas have been particularly spectacular this year, producing an abundance of beautiful, scented blooms. Alongside them, our cut flower growing area has been incredibly productive, providing us with lots of stunning bouquets bursting with colour and fragrance.

The allotments are looking amazing and it is wonderful to see so many people making use of the space. There is a real sense of pride and community as plots flourish and gardeners enjoy the fruits of their hard work. We look forward to seeing many of you harvesting your own home-grown vegetables over the coming weeks.

A huge thank you goes to everyone who has generously given up their weekends to help keep the garden watered. The recent hot weather has presented quite a challenge, and your support has been invaluable in keeping plants healthy and productive. We are also grateful to everyone who has continued to come along and support ARK during the heatwave—although we certainly don't blame those who chose to stay at home in the shade!

We recently enjoyed a lovely Flower Essence Workshop, where participants spent time relaxing in nature, observing the wellbeing benefits of the garden, and creating their own flower essences to take home. It was a peaceful and inspiring day, and we are delighted to be running another workshop in August for anyone who would like to join us.

Looking ahead, we are rapidly approaching dahlia season. The plants are growing strongly, and it won't be long before we are cutting armfuls of blooms and enjoying the incredible colours and shapes that dahlias bring to the garden. We can't wait to see them in full flow.





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July Jobs on the ARK Community Allotments

Keep harvesting little and often – July is a great month for picking lettuce, spinach, radishes, herbs, peas, beans, courgettes and any early potatoes. Regular harvesting encourages plants to produce more crops.

Plant for later harvests – Sow quick-growing salads, spring onions, beetroot, chard, rocket and carrots to keep the harvest going into autumn. You can also plant kale and winter greens for cooler months ahead.

Stay on top of weeds – A quick 10-minute weed every few days is much easier than tackling an overgrown plot later. Remove weeds before they flower and set seed. If you are not going to be at ARK for a while ask an ARK friend if they can help.

Water wisely – Water deeply once or twice a week rather than little and often.

Growing hacks for small plots:

- Add a layer of mulch (grass clippings, compost or straw) around plants to suppress weeds and retain moisture.
- Grow fast crops such as lettuce and radishes in any gaps between larger plants.
- Use upturned plastic bottles with the bottoms cut off as mini watering reservoirs for tomatoes and courgettes.
- Harvest courgettes when small and tender – you'll often get far more fruit over the season.

☀️ **July is all about harvesting, watering and keeping plots tidy. A little time spent each week will keep your ARK allotment productive and enjoyable throughout the summer.**

ARK's Alternative Education Provision

The Young People are opening up a Chocolate/Sweet shop on the week beginning the 13th July. Chocolate has been our topic this term and they are very much looking forward to the grand opening. Also, they may eat a few...They will be decorating the shop, making their own chocolate bars and sweets and there will be a mobile shop for deliveries!

Chocs and Sweets XOX will be filled with exclusive confectionery for one week only! Please come down and visit us, and bring some money, which will all go toward resources for the children and animals. Thank you!

Brass Band & Cream Teas

We enjoyed a chilled afternoon of wonderful music from Stoke Band with 'proper china', cream teas and cake on a beautifully warm sunny day on 14th June. We raised approx. £1350 which was shared between ARK and the local church benefice. Thanks so much to everyone who supported the event, either by volunteering on the day, providing cakes and scones or coming along and enjoying the afternoon – and well done to Linda for winning the Hamper on the raffle!





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Courses and Workshops

Weaving swallows from willow

These sessions will take place at ARK on: 03/07, 06/07, 10/07 and will be from 10am - 12:30pm

Hand and Arm Massage with Bernadette

These sessions will take place on the first Wednesday of each month, starting in August between 1:30pm - 2:30pm. Each slot is 10-15-minutes and you will need to book your slot on arrival.

Eco-printing with Bernadette.

Monday 6th July

10am - 3pm

See Samantha for more information.

Somerset Arts Week

As you may be aware we have registered to be a location for this September's Somerset Art weeks (19/9-4/10/26) – Samantha has already got some great ideas for our event and ...as usual... we are asking you all to participate in some way.

Our main installation will be a murmuration of willow birds, but this will be supported by an installation of wire birds and a further installation of 'milk bottle' birds. We would love everyone within the ARK community to make a bird, so please track Samantha down and she will let you know the days when you can come and make one. Warren has already been busy training some of the volunteers so that we can have enough time and skilled hands to help everyone to join in!

We shall be running an exhibition of artwork from our wonderful volunteers, staff and attendees alongside these, so if you would like to exhibit a piece please just let us know.

We are also hoping to use this period as an opportunity for some fundraising for ARK; as such we would like to ask local professional artists and craftspeople to donate a piece to ARK, that can be sold off via a silent auction.

The artworks will be displayed throughout Art weeks and the artists will be invited in to showcase any other works within our grounds as a 'thank you'. Consequently, if you know of any artists that you know who would be happy to donate, please let us know in the first instance.

Obviously, we will be looking for volunteers to help in the construction, planning and execution of the event, and also for help during the Art weeks themselves. We are planning to open Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons, and will be hosting, offering refreshments and PYO dahlias during the period.

If you would like to help out, please just let myself or Samantha know.

Thanks ever so much, Amanda





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Dates for your diary:

4th July Taunton Armed Forces Day – Vivary Park

6th July Eco Printing Workshop
See SN for more details

7th July Grief Support Group 10:30-11:30
See Nicky P for more info

10th July Female Veteran or serving Armed Forces
coffee morning 10.30- 12.30pm

13th July Carers Support Group 10am - 12.30pm

*18th July - Silent Disco - hog roast & bar 7 -11pm
£15 entry

22nd July End of Term for our Alternative
Education Provision

25th July Crewkerne Family Fun Day.
Please come along to the playing fields (by the
George Reynolds Centre) to join in and say hi to
Nicky

30th July Around the World Bake off competition –
Look out for more info at ARK.

* 31st July Supper Club - 3 courses, band & bar
£27.50 Gates open at 6pm (Somerset theme)

- Please note that the Silent Disco and July
Supper Club are fundraising events at ARK

Regular Events

Tai Chi with Jona every Monday
9.30 -10.30 at ARK. Cost £5.
Weather dependent!

Carer's Peer Support Group Every second
Monday am
Please see a member of staff for more
information

Merriott Community Lunch 7th and 21st July
12.30pm - 2 courses for £6 at Merriott Village
Hall (arrive from 12pm)
Please speak to a member of staff if you are
interested in helping.

Veterans Breakfast
Every Wednesday - 10 - 12.30pm

Health Walks
9th and 23rd July
Just turn up, no need to book . Leaving from
the bus at 10.30 am. promptly.

Art Club Friday mornings
Come along and get creative with Jaki and
friends, either with your own work or try
something new!





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Opportunities from our Bridges to Wellbeing partners

The following are open to all our volunteers and service users. Some activities have a charge.

Chard Community Hub

The Hub needs the following items, please get in touch if you can help: a half-height bookshelf, a small electric keyboard, clothes rails, tinned food items and Men's clothing.

"We are starting a free 'Coffee Cake and Company' group on Thursday afternoons from 3:15-5:00; join us for a cuppa and a chat, meeting new people in a welcoming space, everyone is welcome!

The Mobile Pantry in Chard on Tuesdays has a new route, stopping at Alun Ress Way at 10:15am, Bishops Court at 11, the Skate Park car park at 11:35 and Jarman Way at 11:50."

www.chardcommunityhub.com
Tel 01460 923149

Open Doors in Crewkerne

run a Community Fridge, Repair Hub, Chat Cafe and other events and activities.

They have some 'Going Green' workshops happening in June & July - Get to know your sewing machine & Plant your own kitchen herb garden pot.

More info at:

www.tickettailor.com/events/opendoorssomerset

"How about a tasty nutritious lunch for free? Every Thursday at the Hub on West St from 12-1pm we are offering a Build your own Buddha Bowl activity... fresh ingredients and prepared salads - all your choice, make up the salad bowl you want to eat in the Hub or takeaway! This activity is free for everyone, donations are welcome."

www.opendoorssomerset.org.uk

WATCH in Chard reaches out and engages with isolated adults needing support. It runs a Thursday peer support group, an online peer support forum and delivers wellbeing courses.

For more details, see their new website

www.watchproject.org.uk

"We are seeking another volunteer to help make simple lunches at our Thursday group. Contact Leonie to find out more on 07388 502831."

www.watchproject.org.uk