

renew169

A quiet shared space in Towcester
where it's OK not to be OK

Renewsletter - Winter 2026



Jemma Campanaro: Charity Manager



Jan Prescott: Wellbeing Assistant



Emma Collard Wellbeing Assistant

Towards the end of last year, Jemma made the decision to step down from her role as Wellbeing Assistant, working in the café on Wednesdays and Thursdays, and focus solely on her role as Charity Manager instead, working three days a week rather than five and giving her more time to focus on her family and the business she jointly runs with her husband.

On 1st December we were delighted to welcome Emma Collard as our new Wellbeing Assistant. Emma was already a familiar face to many, having previously been volunteering with us for about a year. Emma now works alongside Jan in the café: Jan is in the café on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays and Emma on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Welcome to the team Emma, we are delighted to have you on board!

New Website

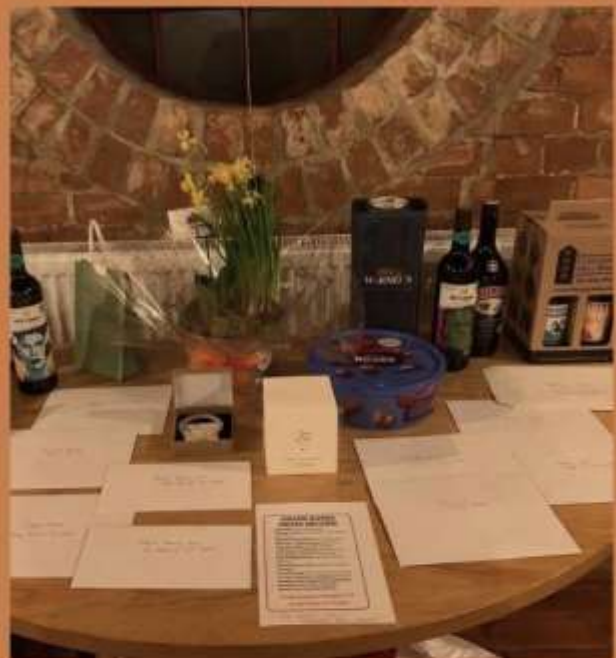
Our newly redesigned website is now up and running. Our grateful thanks to Henny Cameron for so generously giving of her time and skills to create this for us. Please take a look at it by visiting www.renew169.org.uk and remember to bookmark it to keep up to date with useful information, news and events.



Quiz Night Fun!

We had a fabulous time at our fund-raising Quiz Night on Wednesday 12th November and raised the amazing amount of £1160.00. All 90 tickets were sold, raising £450.00 and a further £710.00 was made from the raffle. Our grateful thanks to Towcester Mill Brewery for hosting the event, Inspire Change for running the quiz so brilliantly and all the local businesses who kindly donated the raffle prizes: Specsavers, Towcester; Catanger Llamas; Faegrian Photography;

Rocco & Co Hair and Beauty; Towcester Clinic; Cre8-Pottery Painting; DnA Steak & Grill; Omorfi Nails & Beauty Clinic; Saracen's Head; Flowers by Jill; Warner's Distillery; Venerable Rose and Tesco, Towcester. The incredible generosity of all of these organisations, as well as everyone who came along, meant that every penny raised went towards the ongoing work of renew169.



Photographs (clockwise from top left): The winning team; the raffle prizes; the Inspire Change team with renew169 charity manager, Jemma Campanaro; and the 'strongest' team (at the bottom holding all the others up) and winning the wooden spoon!



On Saturday 6th December, bereavement support charity, The Never Alone Project, hosted a Christmas Arts & Crafts Afternoon at the Café in remembrance of loved ones, entitled 'Making Memories'.

Participants made personalised Christmas baubles and The Never Alone Project said, "Our adult only event at renew169 Wellbeing Café gave everyone a cosy and warm space to open up, get creative, and feel a little less alone. The atmosphere was so supportive and it really reminded us how important it is to have places where people can just be themselves."



'Our 24 Days of Giving'

We were thrilled when a wonderful group of people (Ruth, Sarah, Aaron, Reece and Maddie) visited the café during the first week of December bearing gifts, as part of their 'Our 24 Days of Giving – 2025' project. For many years now, in the run up to Christmas, they have turned December into 24 days of giving, supporting local charities and voluntary organisations through practical donations, as well as thanking everyday heroes by presenting them with tubs of Cadbury's Heroes chocolates. For Advent 2025 we were fortunate to have been chosen by them as one of their charities to support, not only with their kind and generous gifts, but through highlighting the work we do. They brought us a refreshment box to make use of in the café; some hand-made felt crafted gingerbread people that were donated to them by Fern and Fable in Irchester, which we in

turn will sell to help raise funds; and some fabulous 'pocket hugs' – cards containing lovely illustrations and inspirational words, made by Maddie and Reece.



Cooking For One Cookery Course



Starting on 6th October 2025 and running through until the end of November, renew169, in conjunction with Cooking Good, ran a cookery course with the theme of 'Cooking for One'. Funded by a grant from the Northamptonshire Community Foundation, the eight-week course took place at the café on Monday afternoons. It was very well received. Here are some comments from the leaders and those who took part [sic]:

"It's given me more confidence to try different foods and not be afraid and to use the freezer more wisely..."

"It's lovely to see single men here that otherwise tend to grab rather than think about what they're eating or doing, so now there's more effort and thought into what's good for them."

"[I've learned] lots of different things that I wouldn't have dreamed of doing myself. I've got a lot from the cooking. I've tried a couple of things at home: the fish which was lovely... did the fajitas as well..."

"It's been insightful, useful and I've learned some different ways of cooking, from savoury to sweet to snacks..."

"I'm glad it was able to cater for gluten and dairy free."

"... the common theme from people was that when they're on their own, they don't really spend the time to cook or won't bother eating or just have a sandwich, so I think actually it's been invaluable for them to learn ways of batch cooking and making those meals go a bit further by making a basis of something, then changing it and adding other things... so maybe one week put chicken in and

another week have it as a vegetable curry, so that's been really good for people and they've enjoyed learning that."

"It's taught me a lot of new cooking methods and new ingredients that I wouldn't previously have thought of using. Since I've been on the course, I've restocked my freezer with healthy vegetables and fruit and I'm cooking a lot more, but small meals rather than big meals that have caused me to put on weight. I was struggling that I cooked too much... now I'm cooking much smaller portions and freezing things if there are bits left over or spreading meals over a couple of days. Yes, it's been very helpful, plus the social aspect, which has been really good at this particular time in my life."



"It's been a privilege to watch people grow in confidence and see those friendships develop."

"it's a good understanding of what's good for you and what's not good for you, which was explained by the chefs."

"It's lovely the recipes I got and I'm hoping to do a little bit more [cooking], which is something to do and something to learn, even at my age, which is 79 in a couple of weeks!"

Cooking Good is a community cooking project backed by Community Health-Works UK CIC. They partner with local councils and community groups to deliver expert-led cooking sessions. By tackling food insecurity, improving cooking confidence, and promoting good mental and physical health, they help people live healthier, more independent lives. For more information about them, upcoming courses, recipes and tutorials, visit their website at www.cooking-good.co.uk.

Christmas Craft Fairs

The fundraising team were out and about in the run up to Christmas attending lots of craft fairs and shopping events.



First of all, three of our lovely volunteers / visitors, Anne, Pauline and Barbara, went along to the Towcester Library Jingle Jamboree Christmas Fair on Saturday 15th November to sell some of their home-made gifts and other donated goodies. They enjoyed chatting to people about what we do and managed to make £150.00 for renew169.

Then, on Saturday 29th November, Amanda took a selection of items made by volunteers and visitors, as well as some sweets which had been donated to us, along to a church coffee morning and craft fayre in Buckingham and made £102.10 towards our fund-raising target.



On Sunday 7th December, two of our volunteers, Judy & Paul, went along to the Watling St. Village Christmas Market with a selection of lovely handicrafts: Woodwork items made by Paul, felted

pocket bears made by Judy, pottery items made by Judy's sister, Helen, and acorn decorations made by one of our community gardeners, Zoe. Sadly, it was a dreadful day weatherwise and the torrential downpours not at all conducive to displaying and selling handicrafts in the outdoor location in the pub's garden. Nevertheless, they made a creditable £146.00.



Finally, on Thursday 11th December, in conjunction with a late-night shopping event in Towcester when many of our small, independent shops stayed open until 7pm, we opened the café as a pop up 'Christmas Shop' selling a selection of items left over from the various Christmas fairs we'd been to. We also served a home-made festive punch and mince pies. We are grateful to everyone who came along and supported the event and were delighted that it made a further £181.50 towards the ongoing work of renew169. The picture shows Jemma, Amanda and Anne enjoying a sneaky cup of festive punch before we opened!



Dates for your Diary!

Please make a note of the following important dates. Further information about these events will follow in due course:

- Volunteer Information Evening on Thursday 19th March, 6.30-8pm at the Café
- Community Garden Open Day on Saturday 13th June
- St. Lawrence Church Fête on Sunday 28th June
- Craft & Produce Fair with Cream Teas on Saturday 5th September
- Quiz Night at Towcester Mill Brewery on Wednesday 11th November
- Christmas Craft Fayre at Towcester Mill Brewery on Sunday 29th November

We run a wellbeing café and a community garden available for anyone struggling with their emotional or mental health: quiet spaces in Towcester where it's okay to not be okay.



Regular Weekly Activities

Our drop-in service is open Monday - Thursday, 10am-3pm.
No booking necessary, just come as you are!

In addition, we offer the following sessions each week/month:

Tuesdays

- Community Garden, located at the Tove Valley Centre, open from 10.30am – 1pm.
- Lunch Club (soup & toasted sandwiches), 12pm.
 - Join us on a Tuesday afternoon from 1pm for our weekly craft activity.

Wednesdays

- Knit & Natter: A group meets at the back of the café each Wednesday from 10.30am – 12pm to knit and chat together.
- Soup and a stroll: Meet at the café at 12pm. Walk to the Water Meadows and complete one or two circuits, then return to the café for soup and a roll after your stroll.
- Creative Nights take place on the third Wednesday of each month from 7-9pm. Anyone can come along to meet and socialise with others, whilst participating in craft activities. Complete a project you have started at home or try something new.

Thursdays

- Community Garden, located at the Tove Valley Centre, not open Thursdays during winter months.
 - Sandwich Club, 12pm

Fridays

- Grief, Comfort & Coffee, 10 – 11.30am. Free well-being support for any type of grief or loss.
- Pre-organised afternoon wellbeing sessions with Sponne School.

Saturdays

- Towcester Repair Café takes place on the fourth Saturday of each month, from 10am – 12 noon. Bring along your broken items to be repaired. No need to book.

Contact us:

Email: manager@renew169.org.uk

169 Watling Street

Towcester

07761 041203 (Monday to Friday, between 10am and 3pm)

Website: www.renew169.org.uk

Registered Charity no. 119663

