



IA UPDATE



April 2026

Welcome

After April's Ileostomy Awareness Month which saw IA's 70th anniversary celebrated in Warwickshire, and the announcement of new IA appointments, events and developments, here's our round-up!

Our April round-up covers events from around the network, volunteering news and more. Don't forget, we love hearing from you too so please get in touch, whether it's to share your story, give us feedback or let us know about your events: marketing@iasupport.org

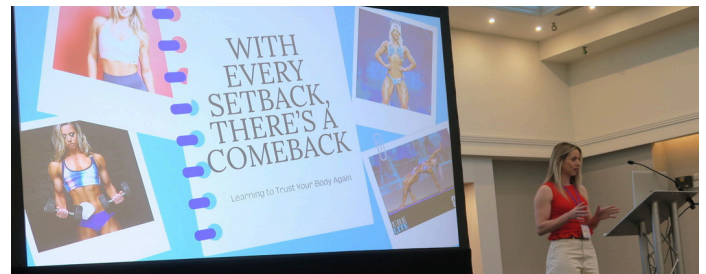
A memorable celebration: IA's 70th anniversary

IA would like to thank everyone who joined us to mark the organisation's 70th anniversary in April at Chesford Grange Hotel, near Kenilworth. It was wonderful to welcome so many friends to our Warwickshire conference to celebrate not just a milestone, but the ability to enjoy life with a stoma or internal pouch.

Our expert speakers and workshop facilitators shared a wealth of knowledge and insight, which attendees hopefully found both useful and inspiring.



We were lucky to be joined by special guests TV personality and disability advocate Mollie Pearce (*above*) and world champion fitness model and personal trainer Zoey Wright (*top right*), who both spoke candidly about their experiences of ulcerative colitis, surgery and regaining hope. Zoey explained that she was confronted with a simple choice: "a box or a bag" but eventually realised that surgery had "set her free".



IA's anniversary was also an opportune moment to acknowledge those who have for many years devoted their time and expertise to IA's longevity. As such, event host Professor Gordon Carlson announced the recipients of **IA's Lifetime Achievement Award**: Bob Bailey (Sussex IA), Sid Brissenden (Devon & Somerset IA), Jonathan Craig-Waller (Surrey IA), Anne Demick (IA Northern Ireland), Carol Katté (Surrey IA), Maureen Naylor (West Yorkshire IA), Paul Pyrah (Lincolnshire IA), Carolyn Stammers (Three Counties IA), Claire Wilson (North Eastern IA), Cecilia Humphrey (Surrey IA) and, posthumously, Peggy Costello (Birmingham IA).

A gala dinner followed at 7.30pm, during which the **winner of IA's 12th Inspire Award for Innovation was announced: IA Northern Ireland**. The group was selected by a panel and announced by award creator Carolyn Stammers (Three Counties IA) for their enhanced implementation of One2One Support among many other developments. North of Scotland IA and West & Central Scotland IA were highly commended.

To the volunteers who supported the smooth running of IA's milestone occasion, we salute you! Grateful thanks also to the product representatives who joined us to engage with attendees and showcase the latest appliance innovations. The atmosphere of the event (no doubt boosted by wall-to-wall sunshine) proved that nothing beats face-to-face contact in this digital age, so huge thanks to everyone who helped make our 'platinum' celebrations so memorable. A wider report will run in the autumn Journal.

Information Day, 25 April 2026



Thanks for your company at IA's milestone Information Day 2026!



New IA appointments: welcome to Lisa Barker and Emma Greenwood

CEO

Lisa Barker will be joining us as incoming CEO from 29 June 2026. Lisa comes with years of experience working within the not-for-profit sector and holds an MA (distinction) in Charity Management and a BA (Hons) in Politics. She has been a director for the last seven years within the not-for-profit sector, currently leading a team of 45 people plus volunteers, delivering services within a large healthcare charity in the UK. She additionally has experience in operations management, safeguarding, governance and in addition to her paid roles, has served as chair of a board of trustees and in other voluntary positions. Lisa describes herself as being 'passionate about peer support and providing people with the information and tools they need to navigate huge life changes.'



Stoma and Pouch Care Specialist Nurse

We have also been recruiting for a Stoma and Pouch Care Specialist Nurse (SPSN) to extend the support services that IA currently offers, and are pleased to announce that **Emma Greenwood** joins us as incoming SPSN from 11 May 2026. With a background in nursing of over 25 years, Emma brings a wealth of practical specialist knowledge in stoma and pouch care in addition to holding a Level 7 qualification in stoma care ('Advanced Principles and Practice of Stoma Care'). Emma was the recipient of the Pat Black Award (2025), a prestigious award recognising her contribution to stoma care for an exceptional piece of journalistic writing within stoma care, published in the British Journal of Nursing, and is leading one of the working groups for Association of Stoma Care Nurses UK looking at elective stoma surgery.

Mental Health Awareness Week, 11-17 May 2026

How good are you at talking about your feelings? Just a little reminder as we enter the annual [Mental Health Awareness Week](#), to acknowledge the lows as well as the highs, and seek support any time you need it. IA offers two different mental health services: our [One2One Support service](#) matches you with someone who has been through similar health experiences to provide reassurance and, above all, listen with empathy.

To address deeper emotional issues, IA also works with two qualified counsellors in our dedicated [Support Through Therapy service](#), which can help you to:

- Learn how to cope with the range of emotions that you might be feeling
- See the positives to help you gain confidence and move forward
- Express your feelings in a safe space and work through those feelings with someone who won't judge you
- Find yourself again

This year's Mental Health Awareness Week focuses on the theme of '[Action](#)'. Perhaps you want to fulfil a dream or goal, lead a more active lifestyle, or become better at advocating for your health needs. However you choose to interpret the theme, taking action can be a launchpad to long-term change.

[Read our article about the benefits of exercise on mental health and how to get started.](#)

TfL's Priority Seating Week, 11-17 May 2026

This week (11-17 May 2026) is Transport for London's (TfL) Priority Seating Week, an annual campaign which, this year, is fronted by artist and urostomate Dame Tracey Emin who has lent her voice to TfL's disabilities announcements during the campaign week. To increase awareness across their services, TfL state: 'From now on, all new priority seats introduced across the TfL network will include the words 'This is a priority seat'.'

TfL also provides a free 'Please offer me a seat' badge and card to help individuals – especially those with hidden disabilities, conditions, or illnesses – to discreetly indicate their need for a seat across the network. You can order them both [here](#).



Save the date: Pouch Information Day, Birmingham 3 October 2026

IA is delighted to announce the details of our annual Pouch Information Day, taking place on 3 October, 10am-4pm, at Leonardo Royal Hotel, Broad Street, Birmingham B1 2HQ.

If you have an internal pouch or are considering one, come and meet the experts! Our programme is being finalised but we can guarantee you a day full of insight into life with an internal pouch. We are delighted to welcome back Mr Richard Lovegrove, Consultant Colorectal & IBD Surgeon, Worcester, as one of our confirmed speakers. Lunch and refreshments included. Please pre-register your interest at: pouch.iasupport.org/pouchday26



Participants required for Sex-PROM Phase 3 recruitment

Researchers at St Mark's Hospital in London are seeking participants to help with their study of sexual dysfunction following pelvic colorectal surgery. The aim is to develop a patient reported outcome measure (PROM) that can be used to identify and treat symptoms of sexual dysfunction after benign pelvic colorectal surgery.

Criteria to help with the Sex-PROM

Have you undergone benign (non-cancer) pelvic colorectal surgery, such as fistula surgery, pouch surgery, proctectomy, stoma formation? Are you over 18, based in the UK and not a previous Sex-PROM participant? Would you like to share your experiences to help researchers develop the tools to help practitioners treat post-surgery sexual dysfunction?

The research team is in the final stages of this study and is looking for participants to complete a questionnaire twice, one month apart.

If you are interested (and qualify based on the above), irrespective of your experience, please contact:

LNWH-tr.sexprom@nhs.net





IA Group News from Roy Bustin, Group Relationship Lead

A warm welcome to new IA volunteers

We are delighted to welcome Nicola Dryburgh and Emily Townsend to the volunteer community. Nicola will be part of Fife IA as 'Group Volunteer', whilst Emily joins as 'Area Co-ordinator' for Kent IA.

Nicola said: *"Hello, my name is Nicola Dryburgh, I have lived with an Ileostomy for 11 years due to slow-transit bowel. I decided to volunteer with IA because when I had my surgery, I felt there was a gap in that there wasn't anybody to speak to with lived experience of having an Ileostomy. I would like to support others and loved ones pre- and post-operative surgery on a one-to-one or group basis to adapt to life with a stoma, to share all the hints and tips I've learned over the years and be a listening ear"*.

Emily said: *"After learning that the Kent community is no longer active, I've taken on the challenge of helping to rebuild a local network. Even while on maternity leave, this feels incredibly important, to me and to my family. My hope is to connect with others, organise events and webinars, and help create a strong, supportive community for anyone living with a stoma or a j pouch. No one should have to go through this journey alone. You can contact me via Kent IA. I'd love to start bringing the Kent stoma and pouch community back together with a gentle relaunch"*.

You can find out more about Emily on the volunteering section of our [website](#).

Discover the history of IA

As we continue to celebrate our 70th anniversary, we are taking a look at the history of IA with Scott Clifford, one of our Trustees. Starting with our formation in 1956, Scott will highlight the advances made to become the charity that we are today. This fascinating talk can be delivered virtually to your group, lasting approximately 30-45 minutes. If you are interested in finding out more, please get in touch at:

volunteering@iasupport.org

Volunteer network meeting

A reminder that our next volunteer network meeting will take place as part of Volunteers' Week on Monday 1 June. We do hope that you can join us for this lunchtime session, starting at 12pm. The informal meeting is open to all current volunteers. It will take place on Zoom and is an opportunity to connect with other volunteers across the network. If you would like to join, please email us at: volunteering@iasupport.org

Intro to volunteering with IA

If you've not volunteered with us before, Volunteers' Week can be the ideal time to consider getting involved. If you would like to know what it's all about, why not join us for a short online session where we can cover the basics and help you to find your perfect role. The session takes place on Zoom at 10am on Monday 1 June. Please let us know if you wish to join by emailing: volunteering@iasupport.org

Volunteering framework: how to help

During the recent AGM, we introduced a proposed framework to support volunteering across the organisation. As part of this work, we are keen to hear from groups about any existing processes they may have in place. We recognise that each group will operate differently and want to understand more about how it works within the context of the group. For some groups, it may be that current processes are limited, but this feedback will still be useful.

The volunteer journey comprises six areas:

1. Recruitment
2. Induction
3. Training
4. Ongoing support
5. Reward and recognition
6. Exit

If you would like to be involved in helping us shape this work, the next step would be for us to arrange a virtual meeting when convenient, and talk through how things are currently working for your group. Please email us for details at:

volunteering@iasupport.org