



Billierena Mars

Hi there, I'm Billierena!

I'm 19, autistic, from & live in Crewe.

I'm usually in the fabulous GLO cafe each Monday 12 noon -14:00.

I first met staff at YMCA, Cheshire, in June 2021 when my work was accepted for their inaugural art exhibition for local artists. I sent some poppy and sunflower paintings to HRH Queen Elizabeth II, who was apparently 'pleased to see' my 'colourful paintings',

In 2022 I started my shop selling crafts & greetings cards- expanded to include other local creatives - Cathy's Crochet & Grace Courts Crafts bags.

I've been volunteering 'officially' since 2022. I now sing regularly at the monthly soir e. My singing can be found on all platforms as @BillierenaMars

I always look forward showcasing my work to family, friends, YMCA colleagues and my community.

As a volunteer I facilitate 'Be Chilled & Crafty Club' for residents. This has now evolved into an opportunity for residents to sell their own unique creations. Currently we have Abi's fabulous greeting card, 'George the Giraffe' for sale with all profits going to YMCA, Cheshire. It is hoped more residents will start to sell their designs in GLO cafe.

I have only ever felt totally valued here in GLO cafe. I struggle with chronic anxiety & avoid social engagement. However I look forward to the warm welcome I always get here. My confidence is much better because of the brilliant opportunities & support & encouragement Fatima, Elohor, Tracey, Becky & Josh have consistently given me.

Basically all the staff I have met show faith in me & my work and I've never experienced this before. Sometimes I've needed to break away from the world and nurse my mental health.

This has never been an issue with YMCA, Cheshire and therefore made it easier to come back in & pick up where I left off!

Now in 2024: I'm so proud to say that I won a very special award 'recognising courage, resilience, and positivity.' from The Lewis Sewell Memorial Trust (please look up <https://www.thelsmt.org/>) I was stunned and still can't believe it.

