

A message from our Chairman - David Cashmore

2023 has been another busy year for Volunteer Action and as the new Chair I am delighted to report on this year's activities.

The community car scheme continues to clock up the miles as its service remains in as much demand as ever. We have had a very welcome and positive uptake in new drivers this year and the new RoadXS booking service is now settling in well with the majority of our drivers taking the opportunity to self-book their drives, which takes a degree of pressure off the office team. Rural transport remains a key priority for the North Northamptonshire council area and VA is very much at the forefront of this focus through the Local Area Partnerships.

Befriending has gone from strength to strength as tackling loneliness in our rural community remains a particularly important social need. To enhance this further, a key development this year has been the launch of the Group Befriending scheme, which is a countywide initiative. Not only does this activity complement our current

Befriending service throughout the East Northamptonshire area but also includes the Corby and district area. It is early days and we are pleased to welcome Annie Goldthorp to the team who will drive this new development. Importantly the Group Befriending project is fully funded and also provides an additional financial contribution to our central operating costs.

With the challenges of the pandemic behind us, the Trustees have been focusing on the financial position of the charity. A lot of work has been done this year spending time in the community to get our message out there. This has involved attending numerous Annual Parish and Town Council meetings, having our stand at multiple local events, approaching national organisations for support and, with Rachel's expertise, increasing our grant funding applications. These activities are already showing promising results and while there is more work to do, we hope to end this financial year in an improved position. In this regard, my thanks go to all of the Trustees and our appreciation goes to our NNC Ward Councillors, Oundle and Thrapston Town Councils and the many Parish Councils throughout the area who continue to be very supportive of our efforts.

Finally, the year end will see the retirement of three of our Trustees, namely Val Chesser, Stuart Anderson and Colin Brown. Collectively they have given over 30 years of service to Volunteer Action and in particular, with Stuart at the helm, they helped to steer VA through the very difficult years of the pandemic. I would like to thank Val, Stuart and Colin for their extensive and invaluable support to Volunteer Action.



A message from our Manager Rachel Dixon



I have been delighted to witness the growth of the Charity in the last 12 months and expand our services to help support more people within the community.

I could not be more proud of all the staff and volunteers who dedicate their time to serving the community within East Northants and the newly launched group befriending scheme in Corby also.

Fundraising has been top of the agenda this year, as the cost of living crisis has been affecting everyone, whether a member of our transport and befriending scheme, a volunteer or unitary funding body - belts are being tightened.

I have been collaborating with Charities and agencies in the area to help ensure that VA remains in a strong position to weather all storms. Your support is vital to this stabilisation and I thank you all in advance for the years to come.

Inside this Issue

Pg 1: Chairman & Manager welcome

Pg 2: Trustee's of Volunteer Action

Pg 3: Community Transport Scheme

Pg 4: The Befriending Services

Pg 5: Fundraising & Volunteer Event

Pg 6: Winter fuel help and Partners

Pg 7: Legacy and Friend of VA

Pg 8: Ways to Support the charity

Meet the new Trustee Richard Allinson

I am pleased to join the Trustees of VA to contribute to the management and governance of this very worthwhile charity.

I have lived in Oundle, Hemington and now Warmington since 2004 with my wife Kate, and two boys – one just started at university and the other just graduated.

An accountant by training, I have worked in the town and elsewhere in senior management roles (admin focussed) in colleges and schools. I have been involved in the governance issues for these employers, and have also been a director/trustee of a mental health day centre organisation in Northampton for over 30 years.

I retired last year and started driving for VA last autumn. To keep myself busy I have a small part-time role as Clerk to a Parish Council, and am also a Trustee of a trust based in two villages outside Northampton that supports various charitable organisations through grants, and am also the Treasurer and PCC member in Hemington.



“Volunteer Action is an amazing organisation, providing an incredibly important service to people in Oundle, Thrapston and the surrounding villages. VA’s dedicated staff and enthusiastic volunteers make it all happen.

We, the Trustees, are there to create the enabling environment, giving support and guidance to the Team; helping them overcome financial challenges; providing strategic direction and good governance... that’s what I enjoy about being one of the Trustees. Having recently fully-retired, it gives me ongoing intellectual stimulation and keeps my brain usefully active as well!”

- Lloyd Martin , Trustee VA

Could you help VA and become a Trustee?

The Trustees, acting together at a meeting, provide the high-level management, guidance and oversight of Volunteer Action. We welcome diversity of knowledge within the community, providing us with the benefit of a wide range of skills and expertise to learn from. We are particularly interested in applications from individuals with some of the following experience:

- Fundraising / Marketing
- Legal

Trustees are appointed for a three year term, renewable up to twice more.

The position is unpaid; however, all reasonable expenses are reimbursed.

Our Trustees are expected to attend 6 meetings each year and participate in annual events to recognise the contribution our volunteers and supporters make towards the service. Most do more than this, helping with specific projects which make the most of their skill sets. If you can volunteer 5 -10 hours per month, you can make a difference.

If you are interested in becoming a Trustee for Volunteer Action, please contact our manager, Rachel Dixon on 01832 275433 or rachel@volunteeractionundle.org.uk and she will put you in touch with the Chair of the trustees for further discussions.

The Community Transport Scheme

Car Scheme - Membership Fee

We sent out letters to all existing members of our community transport scheme in August 2023 to provide you with as much notice as possible of the introduction of the Membership Fee.

These subs will be required from 1st April 2024 to access the transport scheme and will help to ensure that Volunteer Action remains here for years to come to provide our much needed services to our rural community.

12 month membership = £24.00

6 month temporary membership = £12.00

You can pay via BACS, cheque or card over the phone.

Our volunteers have driven on all days of the year - so if you have an appointment - give us a call and we will do our best!

Remember to call the day before your journey to find out your driver's name!

Did you know....?

Our volunteers will wait up to 2 hours for a medical appointment and 1 hour for a social visit.

The Amazing work the volunteer drivers do!



The community car scheme has seen an increase in demand in the last year. Here are some headline grabbing statistics:

- Our Volunteers collectively drove 5 times round the earth – that's 125,000 miles!
- Two thirds of that mileage was for medical appointments.
- 50,000 miles were taken up by outpatient appointments at various hospitals – not just local ones either – VA Volunteers went to:

Danetre Hospital in Daventry.
The John Radcliffe, Oxford.
Leicester General.
Melton Mowbray Hospital.
Stoke Mandeville in Aylesbury.

Near or far - we will do our best to get you to your destination!

Opening Hours - for booking a journey
Monday - Friday - 9am - 1pm - call 01832 275433



Befriending in Oundle and surrounding areas

The Befriending Scheme has seen an increase in demand for its services this year, which is very welcome. Many of our long-term partnerships continue and we have lots of new members and, luckily, a steady stream of new volunteers to support them. A warm welcome to everyone and thanks to our new volunteers. We are currently supporting 90 members, with 6 more people going through the assessment stages for the scheme. 63 volunteers support our members and we have 2 new volunteers going through the induction process.

If you know anyone who could be a Befriender or if you feel you would benefit from using either of our Befriending Services, please contact the office to speak to Angela and her team for more information and a cup of tea.

Hours Volunteered

Befriending Face to Face Visits
1,153 hours
Befriending Phone Calls
695 hours
Support at Social Events
107 hours
Training attendance
383 hours
Volunteering in the Office
155 hours
Total
2,493 hours!!

These hours equate to a contribution of more than £27,000 to the economy. In addition to this, it has been proved that Befriending Schemes reduce isolation, and reduce the need for doctor and hospital visits and reduce the demand on emergency services.

People we support

up to 90 Members

38 people - VA's Face to Face Befriending Service
33 people - the Telephone Befriending Service
19 people have Group events only membership

63 Volunteers



Group Befriending in East Northants & Corby

Group Befriending is a new venture for Volunteer Action, the aim of which is to open new opportunities for those who are feeling isolated or lonely to come and meet other people in a similar situation. Initially these events will be on a set day a week for six weeks, but the long term expectation is that they will continue to run for as long as needed.

Operating within the region of North East Northamptonshire, and including Corby and surrounding villages, we will offer a number of these events at various locations. Already in place is a Christmas Crafting and Coffee morning which will happen every Monday at Kings Cliffe Action Cafe, running between 10am – 11.30am, commencing on 30th October. Also organized is a coffee and cake drop-in at Oundle Waitrose taking place every Tuesday morning, commencing 7th November. This drop-in will largely be a fact-finding exercise to find out what sort of event our service users would like to attend so that we can put some more events into the mix. Hopefully it will also be an opportunity to recruit more volunteers for VA. if you would like to help support Annie, who is running the Group Befriending events - please do get in touch.