



www.volunteerwestberks.org.uk

Volunteer Centre West Berkshire

Charitable Incorporated Organisation 1156302

Impact Report 2017-18

Volunteer Recruitment in 2017-18

THIS year, we have given **354** individuals advice and information on volunteering. 117 of these enquiries were made in person and 237 online/via phone. There are currently **420** opportunities on our database.

Online enquiries:

This year, approximately 93 per cent of our online enquiries were received through our bespoke enquiry form on our website, or via e-mail. The remainder came via other searches.

Flexiteering:

This year, a further three volunteers joined our flexiteer mailing list, bringing the total up to 141 people with specific skillsets offering their time in short, flexible bursts.

Quotes from organisations to whom we have referred potential volunteers:

“We received three volunteer enquiries via our advert with the Volunteer Centre. All three individuals were selected to attend our four-day Restorative Justice Facilitator Training Programme in March 2018 – so we hope that they will really benefit our service in the

near future,” – Jo Vipan, Thames Valley Restorative Justice.

“We have recruited two excellent administrator volunteers for our organisation thanks to the Volunteer Centre. They have added a huge amount of value to our organisation in their first few weeks of work,” – Grace Ryder, Scheme Manager, Home-Start West Berkshire.

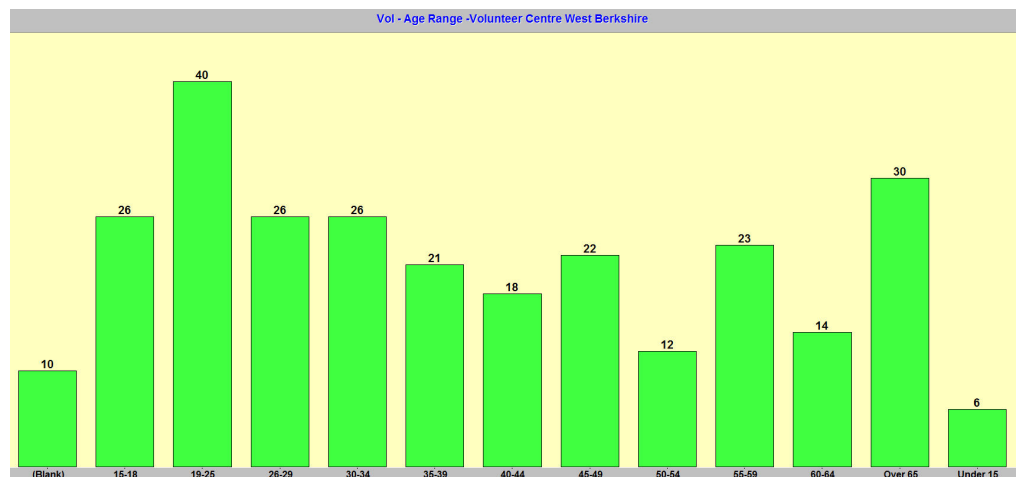
“Many thanks for taking so much time and trouble going through things when we met,” – volunteer Vic.

“The ‘Big List’ is useful because I find that various volunteering sites’ filters don’t easily allow for the possibility of something unexpected coming up!” – volunteer Joel. Volunteer Jane came in to the Volunteer Centre for advice on volunteering opportunities. Following this, she rang to say that she had commenced volunteering with the National Trust. She commented that her first couple of shifts had been very enjoyable and that it was “exactly the role [she] wanted”.



**Chris Read,
Volunteer
Recruitment Officer**

“Free impartial, information and guidance about how, where and when people can volunteer is at the core of our charitable objects. This short report indicates that this service is valued and appreciated by potential volunteers and beneficiary organisations alike,” – GP.



In the year to 31st March 2018, of the 354 people that we supported with advice about volunteering 274 gave their age range. The results of this graph frequently surprise readers.

Overview by the Chairman of the Trustees

“Volunteer Centre West Berkshire (VCWB) continues to thrive and take on new challenges despite the uncertainties faced by all charities in a rapidly changing world and financial stringency”

VOLUNTEER Centre West Berkshire (VCWB) continues to thrive and take on new challenges despite the uncertainties faced by all charities in a rapidly changing world and financial stringency.

The development of the charity's role as the council for voluntary service (cvs) for the West Berkshire area continued apace, and the charity's participation as a member of West Berkshire Council's Health and Wellbeing Board, led to it taking the lead role in establishing the West Berkshire Suicide Prevention Action Group. Chaired by our director, Garry Poulson, this pro-active group has taken positive steps to highlight the problems associated with mental health in the workplace. It held a very successful workshop in October 2017 attended by 60 participants from 50 employers large and small to hear of the active steps that could be taken to identify the dangers of workplace stress.

A survey of needs of the Community and Voluntary Sector held in the autumn of 2017, highlighted a number of areas where small organisations were seeking help and advice to assist them to function more effectively. Accordingly a number of short training sessions have been held and a more comprehensive programme is being developed to address the needs identified.

Another area which has emerged during the year is that small charities and voluntary organisations, along with local authority professionals working in the field, felt they did not have adequate knowledge of the extent of the voluntary sector in the area and the extent to which assistance was available from other organisations. In March therefore, VCWB along with West Berkshire Health and

Wellbeing Board promoted a 'Knowledge Event' held at Newbury Racecourse and attended by 87 local organisations, each of which promoted its own activities and how it could help others in associated fields. This resounding success will undoubtedly be held again in the future.

Whilst developing its new role, VCWB has not ignored its traditional role within the community, and its more familiar activities continue to go from strength to strength. The Thatcham Handybus service is now fully integrated with the Newbury service and, after some legal delays, the three Handybuses are now under the complete control of VCWB. We are grateful for the generous support of Donnington New Homes for their continuing financial support in funding this valuable service.

The Community Car Scheme continues to thrive although with a slight diminution in passenger journeys over the last year. Volunteering advice has been given to more than 350 clients with in excess of 400 volunteering vacancies on our books. Some 18 clients have been supported through the VCMe scheme which provides support to those with mental health issues seeking to volunteer.

Our Befriending project continues to exceed targets and, along with the Village Agents scheme, has particularly targeted parishes in the east of the district during the year. We now have 26 Village Agents active across the district.

Finance for a small charity is always a challenge, and from a budgeted deficit of £44,000 at the beginning of the year, our out-turn of a small surplus is, in large measure,

down to the hard work of our treasurer, Chris Armitage, and his continual monitoring of our financial status and also, of course, our director, Garry Poulson, for his strict financial control of our day-to-day proceedings.

In conclusion, I must formally thank our director for his continuing enthusiasm and support in rising, as always, to whatever challenges come his way and, of course, our hard-working staff and volunteers, without whom we could not provide the services so valued by the community in which we live. Finally, my thanks go to my fellow trustees, who give of their time and expertise so freely in guiding this most excellent charity.

In presenting my annual report, I do so in the knowledge that Volunteer Centre West Berkshire remains on a firm footing, well able to face the future in serving the community of West Berkshire.

Brian Phillips,



Chairman of the Trustees

Director's Report

WITH our role of supporting the voluntary and community sector comes a great deal of partnership work and representational work.

Attending meetings as a full member of the Health and Wellbeing Board at West Berkshire Council is one such board, and there are various sub-groups to include falls prevention committees, and the MEAM (Making Every Adult Matter) group, whose role it is to reduce the effects of homelessness and to support the homeless. Also included are various transport groups and, importantly, working with the CCG (clinical commissioning Group) in their desire to work ever closer with the voluntary sector.

At all of these meetings my role is to listen and advise within the context of voluntary sector involvement and to ensure that the sector's voice is heard in the right places, or to create pathways for both the statutory and voluntary sectors to work together. This work requires keen ears and eyes in order that the expectations of our sectors are translated into a language we can each understand and, vitally, to manage expectations within these conversations.

The level of intensity of these meetings is increasing. New challenges and opportunities are on the horizon. Later this year West Berkshire Council will be announcing the second round of adult social care funding via its voluntary sector prospectus portal. As yet we are not aware of the funding levels or work streams that the council wishes to commission. I will endeavor to keep the sector informed.

As my chairman of trustees has mentioned in his report we must continue to remain focused on delivering services that meet real needs within West Berkshire. Services that are adequately resourced, properly run and, importantly, understood by their intended beneficiaries, so that we meet real need. The project reports contained within this document illustrate the type of essential services that we provide. As a charity we are proud that we have kept our feet on the ground in the way that we help people and organisations within the many and varied communities in West Berkshire.

I was sorry to lose a good friend and office manager of 12 years in January – Jacqui Letsome – but the new year

brought new staff and we have been fortunate to have recruited an excellent replacement for Jacqui. Samantha Raw has settled well into the role. Laura Hunter is supporting our voluntary sector support project and her great IT skills have made improvements to our regular bulletins and events. Along with Sara Hanson and Chris Read the team is working very well to provide excellent and friendly service to the clients and organisations that we support. The office volunteer team, who are listed in this report, are a family and their service above self is demonstrated every day.

I am grateful to my chairman of trustees, Brian Phillips, whose dedication to the charity and support to me has been immense, and to the varied skillsets that our excellent board of trustees bring. I thank them also. Thanks also to Chris Armitage, treasurer, and to Andy Parsons and Patsy Giles for their unstinting time and dedication to making the books work. I've a great team around me. Thank you to you all.

Garry Poulson,
Director, VCWB.



*Garry has often said
the sky is the limit
when it comes to
community
involvement. Well
here he took it quite
literally by
undertaking a free-
fall parachute jump,
from three miles up,
in aid of Berkshire
Vision's Blind Clubs
in Newbury and
Thatcham raising
£1,109.*

West Berkshire Suicide Prevention Action Group established

IN May 2017 West Berkshire Health and Wellbeing Board entrusted the Volunteer Centre to take on the work surrounding suicide prevention in West Berkshire. Garry Poulson rose to the challenge, developed a working group comprising 22 organisations. The group has set about undertaking practical approaches. Chief amongst these was to establish employer training and, at the first event, 50 employers attended representing 11,500 West Berk-

shire employees. In addition signage has been fixed to road bridges, work has been done to create information materials, talks have taken place at comedy clubs and work has been undertaken with SOBS (survivors of bereavement owing to suicide), the group has worked with the horse-racing industry, the Royal County of Berkshire Show, and Youth counselling services and articles have been written for the press. Five meetings taken place. The Volunteer Centre wishes

to acknowledge all of the support it has received from the various groups with a particular mention for Jerry Dixon, of Newbury Samaritans. The group has been supported by West Berkshire Council's Health and Wellbeing Board. Garry's work has received notable commendation by Darrell Gale, author of the Berkshire Suicide Prevention Strategy, for the way in which the West Berkshire group has worked on the recommendations within the strategy.



*In 2017/18
nine New Village
Agent
community
Navigators;
360 clients, some
with complex
needs, supported;
1619 hours of
volunteering
by our agents;
555 referrals to
agencies.*



Gill Comley,
Village Agent
Coordinator

The Village Agent – Community Navigator Service

MOST of us are very independent but suddenly circumstances can change and we need a little help; we then discover we do not necessarily know what help is available. Village Agents aim to put residents in touch with the services that allow them to enjoy the community in which they live and to be able to stay in their own homes for longer.

The aim of the project is for trained volunteers to visit socially isolated individuals in West Berkshire, then navigate them to the possible solutions which, in turn, encourage maintaining independence.

In the year up to March 31, 2018, we have trained nine new volunteers and, therefore, have maintained our level of 26 Village Agents, who have undertaken 1,619 volunteer hours, an increase of 254 hours on the previous year. Our newly-trained volunteers in Pangbourne, Purley and Bradfield have enabled us to be more active in the east of the area. We cover the whole of West Berkshire and have not had to turn anyone away on the basis of geography.

Village Agents have spoken to 1,047 people at various events and supported 360 clients, many with complex needs.

We have received 125 referrals from different sources over our direct line, in addition to the referrals made directly to the Village Agents. We have then in turn, made 555 referrals to agencies to support our clients.

Our most common requests for information and assistance include transport, practical help within the home or

garden, befriending and assistance with the completion of forms. To assist with this growing demand, Citizens Advice Reading held a training morning in February for a selection of Village Agents, on the benefits forms most requested. Our Village Agents have been successful in enabling clients to obtain Attendance Allowance and even appealing against some of the decisions made.

A grateful client's card said: "I have just received the letter...confirming that we have been granted the attendance allowance back dated to November 2017. I am writing to thank you very much for all your help and time you gave with the above. We both send our best wishes."

We have also assisted clients in applying for disabled parking 'blue badges' as well as rail cards and bus pass applications to enable them to travel independently.

Ongoing training continues at our volunteer support meetings with presentations from a wide range of services such as MacMillan Cancer Support and Recovery in Mind.

Once again, in both Compton and Hungerford, our Village Agents were instrumental in organising Christmas Day lunches for both those alone on the day and the volunteers who contributed to the event. This involved fundraising for the event within their communities, a lot of forward planning and, in Hungerford, lunches were also delivered and shared at home with those unable to get out. Both events were extremely successful and plans for 2018 are already being made.

In January we held a joint

'Social Isolation Information' event with our Befriend and VCME services at Sainsbury's in Calcot. We recruited a Village Agent from this event and chatted to members of the public, about how our services can assist. We also held two Village Agent Open Days at the Volunteer Centre in October and March, the latter was one of the snow days which led to low visitor numbers. We did, however, have more successful engagement at the Racecourse Volunteer 'Knowledge Event', where we were able to network with the other services and the public together.

We are very proud of Catherine, our Hungerford Village Agent, who has been awarded the Freedom of the Town of Hungerford for her volunteer work within the town.

Examples of our work:-

A lady, who was widowed and feeling lonely, was not getting out and about. The Village Agent encouraged her to attend five local activities and provided details of a bereavement charity that may be able to assist her.

Village Agents checked on, and assisted, residents in Kintbury, Peasmore, and East Ilsley (among others) during the snow, ensuring their current clients were ok.

A concerned neighbour contacted us about a client recently home from hospital and who had not indicated their need for care once home. This led to another elderly neighbour trying to do quite heavy manual care. We contacted Adult Social Care, who immediately responded, and a care package was put into place.

Village Agent – Community Navigator Service

ANOTHER client had a problem with a phone provider, who was sending in debt collectors for services he had never had. The Village Agent liaised with Trading Standards and the debt collectors to get the debt written off and the client's credit rating reinstated. The client was hugely relieved. Another Village Agent assisted a young mum with practical solutions to enable her to attend her son's nativity play, which meant a great deal to her.

A client referred by Adult Social Care had a back injury and pneumonia. He was sleeping on the sofa at a friend's home. He had not eaten for three days. A food bank voucher was arranged. He was awaiting an assessment for his benefits and was trying to get on the housing list, but because he did not have a computer he could not place the bid. The Village Agent assisted him to phone to enquire about Employment and Support Allowance payments instead of Jobseekers Allowance as he has no credit on his phone.

It was apparent that another client had become socially isolated. He was an experienced carpenter and loved gadgets. He had mental health issues. At home he had a woodworking workshop, where he had put to one side several broken electrical items, which he could not motivate himself to work on despite this being one of his interests. He stated that on some occasions he found it difficult to go through the front door to go out. Our VA referred him to Hack Space, Thatcham and went with him to the Reading area Men in a Shed. He was impressed and commented that they had a good set up. Some enthusiasm returned and he

hoped to regularly attend, taking some of his projects with him.

A gentleman referred last year was revisited. He was on his own having lost his wife. He was ex-Service and had been a member of the Royal British Legion. The Village Agent suggested he might like to rejoin and offered to take him down to his local branch. The Village Agent had asked the chairman of the Legion to keep an eye on him and introduce him around. At the follow up visit the change in him was amazing; bubbly, cheerful, helping other people around the area and really enjoying life.

A client referred by Adult Social Care was assisted in finding furniture from the Furniture Project for his new home which was unfurnished. The Village Agent then helped find removal services to move personal belongings from storage and to help the client move in.

In one of the rural areas an older client, whose Aga cooker had broken, was unable to cook. The Village Agent assisted with finding a specialist repairer, arranging for them to attend. She ensured that a hot meal was prepared each day for the client until the Aga was fixed.

**Gill Comley,
Village Agent
Community Navigators
Coordinator**

**This service is
supported by
volunteers and
West Berkshire
Council -Public
Health**



Hungerford Village Agent Catherine Woolston is a valued member of the Hungerford Community whose work has been recognised by the town this year by the granting of Honorary Freedom of Hungerford. The award was made by the High Sheriff of Berkshire, Graham Barker, and Hungerford Town Mayor, Cllr Helen Simpson.

Many congratulations to Catherine from all at the Volunteer Centre West Berkshire.



The Knowledge Event was supported by West Berkshire Councils Health and Well-being Board



87

organisations attended the 'Knowledge Event' on March 29 and held at Newbury Racecourse

The 'Knowledge Event'

BY working in partnership with West Berkshire Health and Wellbeing Board, the Volunteer Centre sought the support of West Berkshire Council's chief executive officer, Nick Carter, with the aim of creating an event designed to inform inter-sector and statutory sector organisations about the depth, breadth, and complexity, of the voluntary sector in West Berkshire. Nick Carter supported the event which resulted in West Berkshire Council funding the venue for the event at Newbury Racecourse.

The VCWB team set about creating the 'Knowledge Event' which was held on a wet day in March. Some 87 organisations attended ranging from Youth work to cancer care, transport agencies to grant givers, a community radio station to the village agent scheme, and everything in between.

Networking was the aim. The day created an atmosphere of exploration and education about one another's services. Add this to three useful training sessions on General Data Protection Regulation, marketing and bid writing and a picture developed that people working in the social care sector are frequently unaware of just how much is going on. The event was opened by two-times chairman of West Berkshire Council, Quentin Webb, the High Sheriff of Berkshire, Graham Barker, the then Town Mayor of Newbury, Cllr David Fenn, and Mayoress, Marion Fenn, the then Mayor of Thatcham, Cllr Ellen Crumley, and her consort

Cllr Richard Crumly. We were pleased that Newbury MP Richard Benyon was also able to attend, as well as our chairman of Trustees Brian Phillips and our Patron Mr. David Jones. Nick Carter attended and spoke to Thames Valley TV after the event.

Bid writer Sara Hanson successfully applied to the Awards for All lottery fund and secured £3,800 for the event. Garry was ably assisted by our events and training coordinator Laura Hunter, who joined the team in the new year. Feedback has been excellent with requests for a repeat event in 2019.



An article for the *Newbury Weekly News* by Garry Poulson, chairman, Suicide Prevention Action Group

THE profound and shocking event of a suicide of a close relative, spouse, friend or colleague is amongst the greatest emotional trauma that a human could suffer. The effects of a suicide amongst us are long lasting and leave many unanswered questions for those left behind or a severe emotional trauma for those that may have been unwittingly implicated as witnesses to such an event.

What could we have done? What did we miss? If only I had listened to them. If only they had told me how they were feeling. These are the rational questions that may arise after the event. If you are an employer, do we have a policy at work to support people who are coping with stress and anxiety, is there a well-being element to work place appraisals or opportunities for staff to discuss workplace stresses?

Research shows that people are afraid of raising the subject of suicide with someone who may have said that they had thoughts of 'ending it all'.

Rationality, along with a loss of perspective, usually departs those people who are thinking about taking their own life. Research shows that people who want to take their own life don't want to die. How odd that may sound. But the research tells us that people actually want their circumstances to change and in their moment of irrationality they feel that the only way to change their life is to end it.

It is ok to talk to people about how they are feeling. It is ok to ask people if they are considering taking their own life. These questions do not raise the idea of suicide in the mind of the person who is suffering, rather it raises an opportunity for them to talk about their current circumstances and why they may be having suicidal thoughts. It is ok to ask if they are thinking about taking their own life and have they planned it. A common reaction to this may be 'good god no! I'm not that bad and I wouldn't want to do that to my family'.

This is good because at least you will know that their life may not be in danger. If their answer is 'yes', it may then prompt further questions about what their circumstances are, and what you as

a family member, friend, colleague, or employer, may be able to do to alleviate some of the stresses in their life.

People's struggles may be due to personal relationships, deep financial worries, workplace stress, poor mental health, or a combination of all of these things. We can all ask questions or make suggestions such as 'have you thought of making an appointment with Citizens Advice West Berkshire who are trained to advise and guide people with a myriad of personal problems?' If their anxieties are around relationships then organisations such as 'Relate' are available and for younger people in West Berkshire we have an organisation called Time To Talk, that specialises in listening to young people. Samaritans in Newbury is an organisation whose very role it is to talk to people who are suffering and their 24/7 service is there for us all.

It is incumbent upon employers to take time to talk to staff if, for example, they have displayed different behaviours from the norm. Asking them how things are at home may reveal areas of severe stress that an employer could take into account. It may be that a partner has left the household with children. Perhaps the family home is about to be repossessed owing to catastrophic debt problems. Employers can help in a number of ways. Perhaps by discussing options with staff, perhaps guiding them to expert services, maybe time off to help solve their problems. Overtime may help with money worries, or perhaps an employer could fast-track them to an in-house counselling service and, of course, ensuring that their employee goes to see their family doctor who will be able to refer to expert services within the NHS such as Talking Therapies and others.

In May 2017 local charity Volunteer Centre West Berkshire established the West Berkshire Suicide Prevention Action Group in partnership with the West Berkshire Health and Well-being Board. The key aim was to act upon the recommendations made by Darrel Gale, a consultant and director of Public Health and the author of the Berkshire-wide suicide prevention strategy. This new group,

under the leadership of Garry Poulson, has brought together around 20 organisations with the key aim of bringing about practical solutions that might prevent suicide, and to raise awareness of organisations within West Berkshire who are there to support people who may have been affected by a suicide. For example, Racing Welfare, the Coroners' Courts, local Police, Time To Talk, Samaritans, SOBS (Survivors of bereavement due to suicide), West Berkshire Public Health Board, a retired GP, *Newbury Weekly News* editor Andy Murrill, West Berkshire Council Highways, Newbury MP Richard Benyon, a member of the district council James Frederickson, Public Health officers, the Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust, and The Charlie Waller Memorial Trust.

In October 2017 the Suicide Prevention Action Group invited West Berkshire businesses to attend their first, free suicide prevention training morning called 'Start The Conversation'. Experts from the Charlie Waller Memorial Foundation and the Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust delivered a session giving employers very practical messages about how to spot the signs of stress and anxiety in the workplace which could, in some circumstances, lead someone to have suicidal thoughts. Those 50 employers represented 11,500 employees in West Berkshire. It is the suicide prevention action group's intention to deliver two more sessions in 2018. The dates and venues for this free training will be published in the next few weeks. If you are an employer or person responsible for staff, training or have an HR function and would like to attend one of forthcoming training mornings then Garry Poulson, chairman of the Suicide Prevention Action Group, would be pleased to hear from you. He can be contacted via email garry@vcwb.org.uk

If you or someone you know is seeking help and advice, listed here is a small selection of the resources that are available in West Berkshire. These organisations will be able to assist and or direct you to organisations who are able to help.

GP

Resources:

Talking Therapies
0300 365 2000

Samaritans
please use
116 123

Citizens Advice
West Berkshire
0300 222 5941

Relate in Newbury
0118 987 6161

SOBS (Survivors of bereavement by suicide)
0300 111 5065

Time To Talk
01635 760331

Charlie Waller Memorial Trust
01635 869754

Racing Welfare in Lambourn
01488 670034

The West Berkshire Suicide Prevention Action Group are members of the National Suicide Prevention Alliance.

Newbury Community Car Scheme

IN 1974 and based in a little office in Newbury's Plaza building in the Market Place, the Newbury and District Volunteer Centre (as we were then called) established the Newbury Volunteer Car Scheme, local people helping local people to get to appointments of all kinds –to the doctor, hospital, clinic, dentist, optician, and other essential appointments. This was, and still is a, vital service for the elderly and less mobile residents of the town. In 1974 Mary Baker, a school teacher, became one of the first drivers. Some 44 years on we are very proud that Mary is still one of volunteer drivers and she hasn't reached our upper age of 80 yet!

Our office volunteer team, and volunteer driver pool, continues to provide a much-loved and appreciated service.

The number of boxes of chocolates and biscuits presented by grateful passengers to the office at Christmas is reward and encouragement enough to continue with this service.

In the year to March 31, 2018

296 individuals supported by

36 volunteer drivers took people to the following destination areas

Newbury	1,148½
Thatcham	163½
Reading	327½
Oxford	76
Basingstoke	99
Swindon	2
Other	45½
(Client's home to client's home)	12

Total 1,874

Appointment types

Hospital/Clinic	1,016½
Surgery	246½
Dentist	52
Optician	6
Day centre	180½
Clubs	18
Shopping	32
Relative/Friend	8½
Hairdresser	18
Other	284
(Client's home to client's home)	12

Total 1,874

For volunteer drivers who prefer not to use their own car, or who don't have one, the charity owns this very fuel-efficient Skoda purchased four years ago with the support of Newbury Round Table, Jones Robinson Estate Agents and Sovereign Housing Association. Pictured right and below is our Chairman vehicle which is adapted for single wheelchair and family use.



Community Car



Chairman Vehicle

Newbury and Thatcham Handybus

IN April 2017 Newbury Handybus took over the operational activities of Thatcham Handybus to effectively merge the managements of the Handybus services, their passengers and volunteers in each of the two towns. Thatcham Handybus had resolved not to become bus operators and VCWB felt that we had the capacity and willingness to take on Thatcham. Our small fleet now comprises one 11-seat accessible Mercedes Sprinter in Thatcham and two in Newbury. Each of the vehicles are now eight years old and have covered approximately 70,000 miles each. Handybus currently benefits from 32 volunteer drivers and in the year to March 31 we have undertaken 1,024 passenger journeys. Drivers have undertaken 2,510 hours of voluntary time and we have undertaken 9,943 passenger trips.

During the year we have assisted 28 groups, undertaken 364 regular shopping journeys and taken people on 25 special outings.

Trevor Lisseman, our Handybus coordinator of five years, continues to handle all calls, and the driver coordination and bus servicing from the busy Bolton Place office.

Handybus is now in its 32nd year of operation.

The organisations and locations that we support on a regular basis are:

West Berkshire Stroke Care, The Torch Club, Mencap Gateway, New Horizons, Cameo Club, Parkinson's UK, Blind Club, the VIP Club, Touch To See, Steady Steps, Carnarvon Place, Audrey Needham House, Marshalls Court, Groombridge Place, Blake and Co, Harvest Green, Burchell Road, Widows Club, Avon Bank Lodge, Geological Society, St Nicolas' Church, Newbury Friends Together, Argyles Nursing Home, Mallard Close, Eight Bells for Mental Health, Cats Protection and Senior Days Out.

Our wheelchair accessible vehicle (Chairman) undertook: 356 single trips, involving 195 volunteer-driver hours and 2,577 miles driven.

Volunteers

Our drivers, without whom there would be no Handybus service, are listed on the back of this report.

A sponsorship deal agreed with Donnington

New Homes. Pictured here are (left)

MD of DNH, Mark Norgate,

Handybus coordinator, Trevor Lisseman,

and VCWB director, Garry Poulson.



Newbury Shopmobility

IN the year to March 31, 2018, Shopmobility enrolled 1,004 new users of the scheme, 80 people rejoined from the previous year, and 195 people took equipment for longer-term hire (ie. more than a weekend).

Daily Hires

Daily scooter loans	1,004
Daily wheelchairs	173
Power chair loans	35

Longer-term hires

Scooters	809
Manual wheelchairs	1,228
Power chairs	147

Total days equipment used 3,396

This is two per cent down on the previous year.

The service has undergone personnel changes in the final quarter. We are sorry that our coordinator of 10 years, David Seward, retired following a bout of poor health. We wish David a long and healthy retirement. This necessitated the recruitment of two new, part-time coordinators, Lindsey and Julian, who now join Ann Shears, creating three part-time posts instead of two spread over the same six days. This allows greater flexibility for staff cover. The service enjoyed the support of Jacqui Taylor, Malcolm McGregor and Tom Soffe, and our longest-serving Shopmobility volunteer, Angela Neale, who has been with the service since 1995. We are grateful to them all for their support. During a period of staff illness we were pleased to welcome Graham Scutter back to help out. Graham had been our coordinator prior to David.

During the year, we had one scooter stolen. The matter was passed to the police for prosecution. At the time of writing, we are expecting the matter to come before Reading Crown Court.

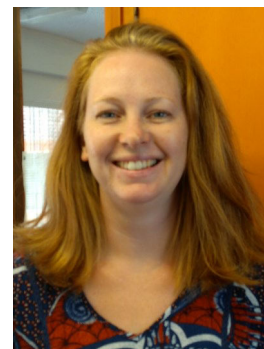
Enabling people's equality of access to the town is the core objective of the service. We are aware that Shopmobility schemes remain a vital service in town centres, and whilst some services around the country have reduced their hours, or been forced to close, we have worked hard to continue a full service.

The service would not be able to run without the support of West Berkshire Council and our volunteers, who add value to the grant for the service.

**Newbury
Shopmobility
is open
Mon to Sat
9.30 am to 4pm
01635 523854
Thanks to**

West Berkshire Council

for its continued support for the less mobile visitors to the town. In addition their recognition of the economic benefit this brings to the town of Newbury



Samantha Raw
Volunteer Centre
office manager

Befriend West Berkshire

Befriend West Berkshire

“I like chatting and having coffee.”

“The volunteer is a lovely lady. I feel fortunate to know her.”

“She is very kind indeed. I am happy with her.”



Simone Foster,
Befriend West Berkshire
Coordinator

THE project is in its third year. New volunteers are recruited and some reluctantly move on. Volunteers leave for family reasons, or perhaps the sad death of their Befriender, or sometimes work commitments, and moving away. This is the natural way for volunteers in this type of project.

Befriendees move on also, going into care homes, passing away, or moving away into care.

We have the full range of referrals including people with physical difficulties and poor mental health.

The project has had 47 new referrals this year. The referrals are from 16 different areas of West Berkshire:

Newbury 13, Theale 1, Thatcham 9, Calcot 5, Speen 1, Pangbourne 2, Hungerford 4, Shaw 1, Beenham 2, Lambourn 2, Chieveley 1, Cold Ash 1, Kintbury 2, Hermitage 1, Woolhampton 1, and Greenham 1.

Some 27 clients have been supported in this second year of the project, mostly having weekly visits from their matched volunteer. This makes a total of 61 referrals being supported over the first two years of the project.

We have trained 54 volunteers to be matched to a lonely person, seven of those

being re-matched when their Befriender had ‘moved on’.

The West Berkshire Council training department developed a safeguarding adults half-day course especially for volunteers, which was held for the first time in January for 15 volunteers. Training on Dementia has been of great value to the volunteers and the project co-ordinator.

Sue Butterworth, Dementia lead for WBC, gave a talk to the volunteers, and the Corn Exchange Newbury ran a very thought-provoking afternoon called ‘Listen with your eyes’, giving insight into what its like to be living with Dementia.

There have been two events to network with other community services/projects. One in Pangbourne village hall and one at Newbury Racecourse. Opportunities to advertise our project to find new volunteers have come from a volunteer information day at Sainsbury’s Calcot, an article in the *Newbury Weekly News* on loneliness, and West Berkshire parish councils have been contacted to ask them to advertise our project in their parish magazines.

It’s always good to know that our work is appreciated as a service. Accordingly, feedback forms were sent to 15 befrienderes, with 14 returns. All with lovely positive comments, such as:

“I like chatting and having coffee.”

“The volunteer is a lovely lady. I feel fortunate to know her.”

“She is very kind indeed. I am happy with her.”

One of our befrienderes who passed away in March was a prominent politician in the 1950s-1990s. He was befriendered by Ray, who said he thoroughly enjoyed his visits when they had banter on politics and local issues.

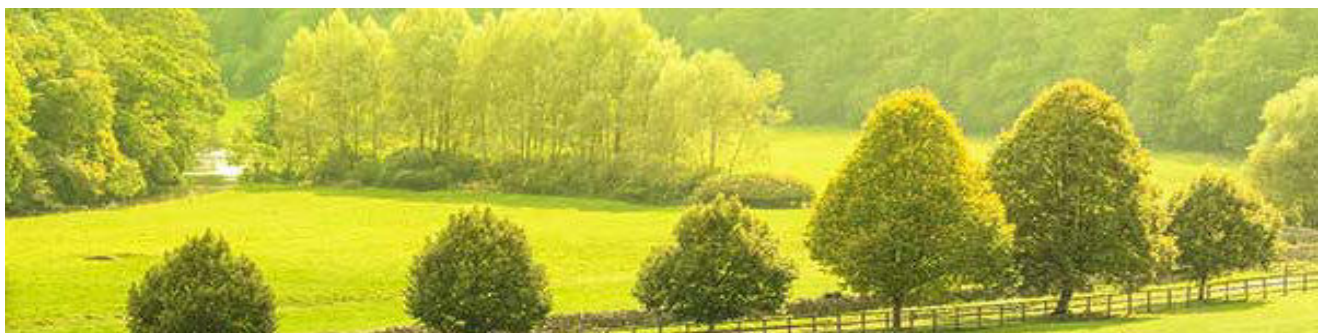
Another volunteer has said she has made a wonderful friend and really enjoys her weekly visits.

Research shows that loneliness contributes to mental and physical health problems which require costly health and social care interventions. Having someone to look forward to seeing reduces isolation, improves self esteem, and brightens the day of both befriender and befriender.

This service is funded by West Berkshire Council Adult Social Care and supports the core cost of the service that the volunteer centre manages and assumes full responsibility for. The considerable added value is provided by our excellent volunteer befrienderes who give of their time to help others.

Simone Foster,
Part-time Coordinator

Befriend West Berkshire is supported by Volunteers and WBC Adult Social Care



VCme – supported volunteering for people with mental health issues



THE VCme project seeks to strengthen our community by reducing the barriers and stigma faced by volunteers who have mental health conditions. It does this by recruiting volunteer mentors to provide support during the first stages of volunteering. The project also provides accredited Mental Health first aid training to local organisations to give them the understanding needed to provide a supportive environment to volunteers with mental health conditions. This knowledge also helps them support their colleagues and families, and gives them useful self knowledge to manage their own mental health.

The Steering Group met three times to support and monitor the project and two meetings have been held to support the mentors. Our project co-ordinator has delivered three sessions on the five ways to Well Being course run at our local mental health Recovery College www.recoveryinmind2016.com/free-courses These sessions point out the value of volunteering in raising self esteem and giving one a sense of purpose and there is an introduction to the project so that learners know what support is available.

Training:

Two Mental Health first aid courses ran during 2017 and it is anticipated that further courses will run in 2018-19. New mentors are in the process of being recruited.

Individuals supported by the project:

22 people were interviewed

for VCme support during the 2017/18 financial year. Nine of these were referred to the service and attended interview alongside a support worker, e.g. a member of the mental health team. Thirteen people self referred, and an additional two people did not turn up. Seven new volunteers progressed to full volunteering during the year.

In the year to March 31, 2018, 18 people (some recruited in previous years) were supported by the VCme project. A further five individuals registered for VCme but have decided not to pursue with volunteering, typically because they did not feel the time was right for them, or their mental health had deteriorated. The level of support given by the project varies based on the individual needs of the volunteer. Some individuals have benefited from regular mentor meetings, whilst others have only needed mentor support at the very start of volunteering or occasional telephone/e-mail support from the project coordinator.

Examples of people who have been supported by the project this year:

‘N’ decided he wanted to use his own experiences of mental ill health to help others. Through VCme, he took on a peer support role with a local organisation, progressing to independent volunteering and increasing the number of hours spent volunteering each week. He commented “the process of finding a placement with the project

coordinator was good, and the placement is appropriate for me. It’s a happy and relaxed place to volunteer”.

‘C’ took up a weekly administration volunteering role with a West Berkshire charity, with support from the VCme project. She told us: “It’s going really well. Volunteering has been a good distraction as my depression has not been good. It helps me to be doing positive things.”

‘L’ had been experiencing anxiety and depression and volunteered with two local environmental organisations through the VCme project. She told us: “Volunteering has provided me with a routine, taking me out of my comfort zone. Being amongst a different group of people and in a different environment whilst volunteering gives you something that you can’t get at home, or socially. I’ve felt a sense of achievement and been able to see the wider world again. The process of beginning volunteering has been easy and not felt overwhelming, with friendly support from my mentor and the project coordinator.”

Following volunteering, ‘L’ has decided to return to paid employment. She commented: “I wouldn’t have been able to go straight back to work. Volunteering has provided a step between my medical treatment and employment.”

**Chris Read,
Part-time VCme
Coordinator**

The VCme project seeks to strengthen our community by reducing the barriers and stigma faced by volunteers who have mental health conditions.

This service is supported by Volunteers, The Berkshire Community Foundation, Edwards Life Sciences and Greenham Common Trust



Who makes things happen in the Volunteer Centre office?

The Volunteer Centre office book-keeping and IT team		Sue Cox	35 yrs
		Kate Kenna	25 yrs
Chris Armitage	10 yrs	Catriona Ottner	16 yrs
Andy Parsons, book keeper	20 yrs	Mary Marsh	17 yrs
Patsy Giles, Handybus book keeper	32 yrs	Jean Allen	7 yrs
David Woodhead, IT	18 yrs	Jean Jones	23 yrs
Jeff Goodenough, car Scheme IT	10 yrs	Sue Campbell	37 yrs
Volunteer Office Car Team		Julia Jones	11 yrs
Liz Fenton	24 yrs	Julian Greaves	2 yrs
Jean Fleming	13 yrs	Garry Poulson, director	20 yrs
Ros Littlejohn	5 yrs	Samantha Raw, office manager	6 months
Gill Smith	3 yrs	Trevor Lisseman, P/T Handybus	5 yrs
Katy Hawthorne	32 yrs	Chris Read, P/T VCme Recruitment	3 yrs
Yvonne Brick	12 yrs	Sara Hanson, bid writer, Vol sector	3 yrs
Jenny Murdoch	6 months	Laura Hunter, events coordinator	6 months

342
years
of
combined
voluntary
service in
our office
team

Fund-raising and bid writing

DURING 2017/18, the Volunteer Centre successfully raised funds for the relaunch and rebranding of the Newbury and Thatcham Handybus from Donnington New Homes and Greenham Trust, with a donation from Newbury Round Table; the VCme Supported Volunteering project from The Greenham Trust, Edwards Lifesciences, and Berkshire Community Foundation; Voluntary Sector Support Service from the NHS Partnership Development Fund and the West Berkshire Community

and Voluntary Sector 'Knowledge Event' held at the racecourse from The Big Lottery Awards for All, with substantial support from West Berkshire Council. The Village Agent Service received funds from John Lewis PLC. Other donations were made by Newbury Round Table, towards marketing and promotion, and by Newbury Town Council, towards the Community Car Scheme, and Newbury Rugby Club donated to the suicide prevention action group.



Sara Hanson,
voluntary sector support officer

Voluntary Sector Support and training

WE have provided three bid writing workshops which have been held attended by 31 people from 30 organisations. Five community groups have been supported with specialist advice, and from January 2018 – March 2018 eight meetings were clerked. These groups are West Berkshire SEND Providers forum, West Berkshire Children and Young People's Forum Executive, and the West Berkshire Suicide Prevention Action Group. Thir-

teen people from 13 community and voluntary organisations were given one-to-one advice to help them identify and access suitable funding opportunities, or to comply with new legislation. In addition, we provided a special course on the General Data Protection Regulation legislation and a 'Marketing your Charity' course.



Laura Hunter
Training and events coordinator

Governance

Mary Bedwell, President.

David Jones, Patron.

VCWB Board of Trustees:

Brian Phillips, chairman

Peter Ferguson, deputy chairman

Chris Armitage, treasurer

Mary Marsh

Malcolm Poynter

Brien Beharrell

Mike Youdan

Cllr Jeff Beck

Ian Nichol

Cllr Margo Payne

The finances:

Detailed accounts will be available upon request after the July 20th, AGM.

We are grateful to our supporters:

West Berkshire Council

The Berkshire Community Foundation

Donnington New Homes

The Greenham Trust

Newbury Town Council

Newbury Weekly News

Edwards Life Sciences

John Lewis Partnership

Big Lottery Awards

for All

Newbury Rugby Club

Heathrow Community Fund

Newbury Round Table



Vice-presidents:

Kath Harding

Gill Hall

Ian Langley

Tim Barton

Mary Marsh

Jonathan Hopson

Dennis Brown

Sue Campbell

Sue Cox

Liz Fenton

Katy Hawthorne

Mary Baker

Patsy Giles

Kaye Kenna

**Charitable Incorporated Organisation:
1156302**

1 Bolton Place, Newbury

RG14 1AJ

01635 49004

info@vcwb.org.uk

Twitter: @vcwb1

Facebook: Volunteer Centre West Berkshire

The former chairman of West Berkshire Council writes:

VOLUNTEERS are the backbone of our community. The Volunteer Centre director Garry Poulson has led from the front, and we all owe him a massive thank you in the managing of the centre. Thank you Garry. The Volunteer Centre aims to bring people, groups, businesses and partners together, and to inspire co-operation across all participants with the particular emphasis on motivating new volunteers to step forward and help those organisations and groups that interest them. What a difference that extra assistance makes. You should be able to find the answers to your questions by visiting the centre and matching your abilities to the job opportunities.

I had great pleasure in formally opening the West Berkshire voluntary and community sector 'Knowledge Event' and then meeting those who participated. A truly inspiring event.

Cllr Quentin Webb
Former chairman,
West Berkshire Council
2016/17 - 2017/18.



This is a list of 210 wonderful people who volunteer for our direct services. We are proud to say that Mary Baker who started volunteering for us in 1974 still is !

The Volunteer office book keeping and IT team

5

Chris Armitage
Andy Parsons
Patsy Giles
David Woodhead
Jeff Goodenough

Volunteer Office Car Team

14

Liz Fenton
Jean Fleming
Ros Littlejohn
Gill Smith
Katy Hawthorne
Yvonne Brick
Jenny Murdoch
Sue Cox
Kate Kenna
Catriona Ottner
Jean Allen
Mary Marsh
Julia Jones
Jean Jones
Sue Campbell

Village Agent Community

Navigator Volunteers

28

Blanche Herman
Catherine Wooliston
Penny Brookman
Julian Baker
Lyn Fisher-Garrett
Jess Boon
Patricia Burnett
Jo Ramshaw
Janice Cook
Julian Weal
Elaine Cross
Angela Bates
Glenn Peters
Brian Barnes
Lynda Sylvester
Huw Davies
Kaye Broom
Robert Lewis
Martin Allport
Mary Leslie-Smith
Carolyn McAuley
Sue Chapman
Heather Whetter
Sarah Wilson
David Green
Joanie Dyson
Marilyn McManus

Volunteer Car Drivers

34

Mary Baker
Liz Briggs
Matthew Briggs
Michael Brooks
Robin Busby
Sue Campbell
Simon Carter
Bob Chapman
Babs Copeland
Andrew Edge
Mervyn Else
Ann Evans
Peter Fergusson
Duncan Gibb
Louise Gilboy
Jeff Goodenough
Richard Gray
John Holdway
Bob Hotchkis
Rob Hutchins
David Jessett
Jill Jessett
John Marriage
Robert Meyer
Clare Owen
Hazel Owen
Brian Phillips
Bob Reid
Peter Richards
Mandy Smart
Chris Strang
Malcolm Thomas
Stephen Thompson
Gary Walsh

Flexiteers

31

Flexiteers are volunteers with specific skillsets who we are able to ask when we have tasks to fulfil that needs a specialist skill

Trustees

9

Handybus Volunteer Drivers

35

Angela Logue
Angus Macdonald
Bill Boulton
Bob Terret
Caroline Billington
Chris Morsley
Clive Loveless
David Howard
David Pietralczvk
Frank Knott
Helen Bartlett
Gill Garrod
John Fleming
Julian Foley
Julian Weal
Keith Cummings
Lesley Garner
Malcolm Thomas
Norman Casson
Oliver Hinton
Peter Dibley
Peter Jona
Phil Pool
Philip Eaton
Phillip Russell
Rex Wearn
Richard Aston
Richard Foster
Richard Holdaway
Robert Ferryman
Roger Ambler
Scott Whetton
Steven Brown
Trevor Lisseman
Wayne Harrison

Shopmobility Volunteers

7

Angela Neale
Philip Shears
Tom Soffe
Malcolm MacGregor
Philip Shears
Jacqui Taylor
Patricia Lisseman

Befriend West Berkshire Volunteers

38

Carol Stanley
Daniell Smith
Rachel Rushmer
Alison Sampson
Mary Marsh
Richard Long
Amanda Oliver
Roz Morris
Maria Bowley
Hilary Reynolds
Sue Povey
Gabrielle Wienand Sparkes
Rebecca Cusack
Maria Pratico
Paul Crookson
Julie Evans
Lou Moran
Jonathan Hopson
Ros Littlejohn
Caroline Andrews
Lynda Macadam
Brenda Thomas
Sue Chapman
Rebecca Cook
Maria White
Mary Roper
Mary Moore
Marian Samson
Bett Clough
Angela Bates
Kat Weirheim
John Stevenson
Carolyn Culver
Katie Simmonds
Jackie Hull
Steph Peters
Cornelai Fehrenbach

VCme Volunteer Mentors

8

David Chapman
Robert Dawes
Jacqui Letsome
Rachel Rushmer
Greg Smith
Helen Wright
Gill Young
Eddie Newick

VBase Support

1

Julian Greaves

Without these people making their daily, weekly, monthly and annual contributions to West Berkshire there would be no Volunteer Centre. Thank you