



The King's Award  
for Voluntary Service



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## Volunteer Action is awarded the King's Award for Voluntary Service

A lifetime honour recognising our incredible volunteers

We are immensely proud to share some news with you all – Volunteer Action has been awarded the King's Award for Voluntary Service, the highest national honour for volunteer groups in the UK!

Often described as the “MBE for voluntary organisations,” this prestigious award recognises exceptional work by groups of volunteers who make a real difference in their communities. It celebrates the dedication, compassion, and commitment that define the very heart of Volunteer Action – our volunteers.

This award is not just a moment of recognition; it's a lifetime honour that we will carry forward with pride. It shines a light on everything that our volunteers do – supporting people, tackling isolation, offering friendship and transport, and giving their time, energy, and kindness to improve lives across our community.

As a charity, we want to take this opportunity to say a heartfelt thank you to every one of our volunteers, past and present. This award truly belongs to you. Your willingness to give your time, your compassion for others, and your belief in community spirit has made Volunteer Action what it is today. Without you, none of this would be possible. We'd also like to thank our supporters, partners, and staff members who help make our work possible every single day. Together, we've built something very special – a network of kindness that reaches into every corner of our community.

This recognition reminds us why we do what we do – to connect people, reduce loneliness, and make a lasting difference in the lives of others. As we celebrate this wonderful achievement, we're also inspired to look ahead, continuing to grow, support, and empower our community through volunteering.

Thank you again for being part of the Volunteer Action story.

We are so proud to share this award with you – and to carry it forward, for life, together.

### A message from the Chair of the Trustees - David Cashmore



2025 has been a momentous year for the charity. The year started in preparation for our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary for which Val Chesser wrote a brief history of Volunteer Action; it opens with the line “from tiny acorns grow mighty oaks”. It is evident that Volunteer Action has become a trusted and invaluable service to many in our community and a mighty oak that can be relied upon. Celebrating 30 years of service is certainly a mighty achievement. The year has concluded with the outstanding honour of receiving the King's Award for Voluntary Service. This award recognises the extraordinary work of our 178 volunteers, without whom Volunteer Action would not be able to provide its range of services.

Over its 30 year history, VA has successfully adapted and changed in response to external events and the increasingly demanding charity sector funding and operational requirements. As we look ahead to 2026, Volunteer Action will continue to change as we aim to enhance our existing services, ensure comprehensive coverage throughout the area and seek new opportunities to tackle the social challenges and needs that our community faces.

Celebrating our 30th anniversary could not have been possible without the dedication and hard work of our volunteers over many years and receiving the King's Award for Voluntary Service is an outstanding recognition of service to the community. On behalf of the trustees and staff, I'd like to thank all of our volunteers for their invaluable commitment and support.

## A note from our Chief Executive and Charity Manager, Rachel Dixon



As we come to the end of another busy and inspiring year, I'm so proud of everything Volunteer Action has achieved together. From our befriending scheme to our community transport and outreach projects, our work continues to make a real difference in reducing isolation and strengthening connections across East Northants.

Looking ahead, we're committed to building on this success – expanding our reach, developing new partnerships, and continuing to ensure that no one in our community feels alone or unsupported.

This issue is full of updates, news, and useful information – and I'd be so grateful if you could share it with neighbours, friends, or anyone who might find it helpful. The more we spread the word of VA, the better for the community.

I would like to take this opportunity to say a heartfelt thank you to every volunteer, member, supporter, trustee, and staff member. Your generosity of time, spirit and kindness make Volunteer Action what it is today.

Finally, I'd like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year – and to thank you once again for making our community stronger, together.

## Finding Friendship and Freedom again - an anonymous reflection

**We receive many thank you cards on behalf of the volunteers support - however this story touched our hearts deeply and with permission, we are able to share this wonderful story of a members journey joining VA with you.**



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Before I found Volunteer Action, life felt very small. Most days passed quietly, one much like the next. I'd lost touch with many friends over the years, and getting out on my own had become difficult. The walls of my home began to feel like the edges of my world. Loneliness crept in slowly, until it became a constant companion. I didn't realise how isolated I'd become until I was given the chance to reconnect.

That chance came through Volunteer Action. When I was first introduced to my befriender, I didn't know what to expect. I worried that it might be awkward, or that I wouldn't have much to say. But from our very first chat, things felt easy. My befriender listened, laughed with me, and reminded me that conversation could be something to look forward to again. Over time, those visits became a highlight of my week. I began to feel like myself again – part of the world, not hidden away from it.

With a little encouragement, I started joining local clubs and activities. I never imagined I'd be confident enough to do that again, but having someone believe in me made all the difference. And thanks to the car scheme, I've been able to get out and about – to the shops, to appointments and even to social events I'd long given up trying to attend. What used to feel impossible is now part of my routine.

It's not just about getting from one place to another; it's about belonging again. Volunteer Action has helped me rediscover joy in everyday moments – a shared cup of tea, a trip into town, a chat with new friends.

To anyone who supports or volunteers with Volunteer Action, please know how much of a difference you make. You don't just offer lifts or companionship – you offer hope, connection and a reason to smile again.

From someone whose life you've truly changed – thank you.



## Volunteer Action Celebrates 30 Years of Community Support!

On Tuesday 3rd September, Volunteer Action proudly marked a remarkable milestone – 30 years of supporting our local community – with a joyful celebration at Barnwell Village Hall.

Nearly 100 volunteers and supporters came together to honour three decades of service, friendship and commitment. Guests enjoyed a delicious spread from Stanley Street Eats, fine wines courtesy of Amps Wine Merchants and a stunning celebration cake lovingly baked by one of our own volunteers, Maureen Weston.



The evening was filled with warmth and gratitude, featuring heartfelt speeches and the presentation of long service certificates to recognise the dedication of our incredible volunteers. The celebrations ended on a high note with a lively game of Music Bingo, bringing plenty of laughter and smiles to the hall.

### Winners of long service certificates:

**5 years** - Michael Davidson, Duncan Hook, Jacqui Martin, Simon Murray, Nigel Reed, David Wood, Caroline Yeo.

**10 years** - John Hunt, Lorna Coutts, Denise Clareboets, Elizabeth Clayton, Heather Orange

**Special recognition:** Denise Clareboets, John Hewitson

Here's to the next 30 years of community, connection and caring – together!



Duncan Hook, volunteer, receiving a long service award



Group Photo of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations



Beautiful cake created by volunteer, Maureen Weston



The hall on the evening of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary



# Christmas Raffle Tickets



This is your last chance to purchase a Christmas raffle ticket (must be purchased by 19th December 25. The prize winning draw will take place on 23rd December 25)  
Prizes include: £100 Waitrose Voucher, a Christmas hamper and Edinburgh crystal glasses.

**Priced at £1 per ticket – this is a much needed fundraiser for VA. Please contact [admin@volunteer-action.org.uk](mailto:admin@volunteer-action.org.uk) or call 01832 275 433 to purchase yours today!**



## Market stalls and Fundraising

Thank you to everyone who has donated their time to join us at a village hall or a street market during the last year. From The World Conker Championships to Thrapston Charter Fair and visiting villages in between, we have enjoyed every one of the events and seeing everyone! We still have the Oundle and Thrapston Christmas Markets to look forward to on 29th November and 6th December.

A huge thank you to Brigstock Beer Festival who kindly donated £525 to Volunteer Action to help us support the Brigstock community!

Colemans of Oundle has also chosen Volunteer Action as the charity recipient for their fundraising Christmas Cards again this year - please do pop into Colemans and purchase a pack...or two!

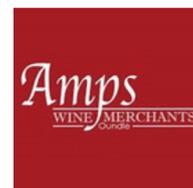
Thank you to Graham Drage who raised over £500 in a sponsored walk in 2025 - topping his previous success the year before!

**Could you help raise funds for VA with a sponsored walk or similar? Contact us today!**

## Thank you to our supporters and partners of 2025/26



**Barnwell Parish Council**



## Befriending and Social Events

This year, Volunteer Action's befriending scheme has continued to make a real difference across East Northants. Thanks to our amazing volunteers, dozens of local people have enjoyed regular chats, home visits and renewed connections that brighten their week. Together, we've helped reduce loneliness, boost confidence and improve wellbeing for those who need it most.

Demand for the scheme has remained steady, with many of our long-term partnerships continuing to flourish and new volunteers joining to support ongoing referrals. We're proud to currently be supporting 114 members with 64 dedicated volunteers – an incredible achievement! A huge thank you to everyone involved and a warm welcome to our new volunteers.

This Easter, Angela organised a fantastic day trip to Bosworth's Garden Centre, Market Harborough where members enjoyed a lunch and a leisurely stroll through the centre. Our heartfelt thanks go to Oundle School for the loan of their minibus and to Duncan, our driver for the day. Erika is now organising more trips for 2026 - to allow Angela the time to dedicate to the growing 1:1 relationships.

Together, we've made 2025/26 a truly heart-warming year of friendship, connection, and community spirit.

### Befriending at VA

**274** attendees at our monthly social events

Befriending volunteers have provided **2,860** hours of support.

Total of **64** Befriending volunteers that we wish to thank for all their support!!

If you feel you would benefit from a befriending relationship, please do reach out to Angela and her team on 01832 275433 who will be only too happy to discuss the options and process of matching you to a volunteer.

## Social Activities in East Northants & Corby

VA has been building on its programme of social activities since its inception over 18 months ago. Alongside the SPRING social prescribing team we run weekly walks at Corby Boating Lake and, starting November 2025, will be introducing a second weekly walk around Barnwell Country Park. The physical and mental health benefits of walking and talking are well documented and it's great to see so many participants coming along; improving their wellbeing and making new social connections.

Since September we have provided subsidised transport to Active in Motion in Corby. AIM is an inclusive, welcoming gym with state-of-the-art power assisted equipment suitable for people of all ages and abilities. Our members have seen improvements in their mobility, strength and general wellbeing as a result of weekly attendance at AIM.

Our monthly craft group at Stronglands Court in Oundle started in January 2025 and is always well attended. Attendees produce an array of individual creations and enjoy meeting up for a chat, coffee and homemade cake!

We're looking forward to Erika expanding our social activities programme further in 2026 details of which will be on our website or contact her direct on: [erika@volunteer-action.org.uk](mailto:erika@volunteer-action.org.uk)

Thank you to everyone who joins in with social activities. We welcome your feedback on what you enjoy – and what you don't! If you have any suggestions for activities and events please get in touch.

And finally thank you to all the brilliant volunteers who help with social activities – your contribution makes a huge difference to the people we support.

### Social Activities at VA

**757** attendees at sessions in East Northamptonshire and Corby!

**Would you like to get involved in organising an event or cafe meet up? Please call the office on 01832 275433 to discuss.**



# The Volunteer Car Scheme



**Opening Times**  
(to book or confirm a journey)  
**Mon - Fri, 9am - 1pm**  
**01832 275433**

Miles driven by volunteer drivers = 134,000  
Journeys completed = 13,000  
Volunteering hours donated = 10,300 hours  
People supported = 1189 throughout the year!

**A huge thank you to all the volunteer drivers!**

Weds - 24th Dec - 9am - 1pm  
Thurs - 25th Dec - **CLOSED**  
Fri - 26th Dec - **CLOSED**  
Mon - 29th Dec - 9am - 1pm  
Tues - 30th Dec - 9am - 1pm  
Weds - 31st Dec - 9am - 1pm  
Thurs - 1st Jan 26 - **CLOSED**  
Fri - 2nd Jan - 9am - 1pm

## Christmas Opening Times

Please make a note of the dates we are closed for bookings over the Christmas and New Year period.

We will be accepting **medical journeys only** between Christmas and New Year and up until the 5th January 2026. Thank you in advance for your understanding and support.

Please call the office to find out the name of your volunteer driver in good time for the journeys you book with VA.

## From our passengers to our volunteers - a thank you!

“Thank you to all the volunteer drivers – your kindness and reliability make such a difference. I wouldn’t be able to get to my appointments without you!” Mrs B, Oundle

“I really appreciate the friendly chats on the way – it’s more than just a lift; it brightens my whole day.”  
Mr P, Lowick

“Every driver I’ve met has been wonderful – always cheerful, always willing to help. You’re all amazing!”  
Mrs S, Thrapston

## Behind the Scenes - the Office Volunteers

The busy Volunteer Action car scheme office based in Fletton House, Oundle, is supported everyday, come rain or shine, by a volunteer base on a rota system. They help to answer phones, allocate journeys to volunteer drivers, complete regular admin tasks and so much more. Thank you to each and every one, as you truly are the backbone of the VA office.

Together the office volunteers have donated over **1,100** hours of time to supporting the local community in the last financial year.

## How to leave a gift to Volunteer Action in your will

If you, or your loved ones, have benefited from the support and service that Volunteer Action provides, why not consider leaving us a gift in your will. I hope that the information below will help to answer any questions you might have about leaving this special gift to the charity:

### Why should I leave a gift in my will to Volunteer Action?

Gifts left to VA are absolutely vital to our work. They enable us to run our essential services for older people - including our Community Transport Scheme and Befriending Services. They help us to expand our work and look for new ways to tackle the issues facing people as they get older, such as poverty, loneliness and isolation. Much of what we do would not be possible without gifts in wills.

### There are 3 main types of gift you can leave in your will:

- A residuary gift is a percentage of your estate once any specified gifts have been made to friends and family. Many of our supporters choose to leave this type of gift because its value will be dependent on the value of your estate at any given time rather than a set amount. This provides supporters with more flexibility when deciding how to ensure that their loved ones are well looked after first and foremost.
- A pecuniary gift is a specific amount of money. It's worth bearing in mind that the effects of inflation mean that this type of gift is likely to lose value over time and may end up being less than you initially intend.
- A specific gift is a gift of a specified item – such as a personal possession, land, buildings or stocks and shares.

### Is it difficult to change my will to leave a gift to Volunteer Action?

Not at all. In fact, if there are no other changes you want to make, you might decide to add a supplement to your will to make an amendment (known as a codicil).

**Let us know about any gift you have chosen to leave VA today on [admin@volunteer-action.org.uk](mailto:admin@volunteer-action.org.uk) - we thank you for your support.**

## Become a Friend of Volunteer Action

You can choose to become a Friend of VA by setting up a regular, monthly donation via Standing Order in any amount to suit you. This monthly amount helps to support the services we provide to the local community.

You will receive a monthly update via email, an invite to our social events to say thank you to volunteers and supporters and a warm feeling knowing that you are instrumental in the survival of a vitally needed service in East Northamptonshire.

**Please use the details below to set up your standing order to Volunteer Action on a monthly basis - any amount you can donate will help us continue our much needed service to the community.**



**Bank name: CAF Bank**  
**Account Name: Volunteer Action**  
**Sort Code: 40-52-40**  
**Account Number: 00031964**



◆ Thank You ◆

We're so grateful for your support—through volunteering and donations alike. Below are simple ways to help VA, from shopping online at no extra cost to joining our 200 Club and adding Gift Aid to boost your impact.

## Join the 200 Club

Don't forget to re-join, or sign up as a new member for our 200 Club!

The first of our 12 monthly draw's will take place on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026 and the final will take place in March 2027. Entry costs £60 for the year and you can win up to £150 each month! Your support provides vital funds that help our small independent charity stay active and serving the community.

Anyone can enter — so please recommend us to your friends and family. Join today and help support VA!



A simple way to raise funds for Volunteer Action whilst you shop online.

Please remember to use easyfundraising every time you shop online! Over 7,000 brands will donate, so you can raise FREE donations for us no matter what you're buying. These donations really help us out, so please sign up if you haven't yet. It's easy and FREE! You can get started at:

[easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/volunteeraction](https://easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/volunteeraction)

*giftaid it*

Are you a UK taxpayer? If you are, this means we can claim extra money from HMRC on top of your donations (with your completed form). An extra 25p for every £1 you donate at no extra cost to you!

Gift Aid forms are available for collection from our office or we can post to you. We can also email a PDF - please call the office for more details.