

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

The statistics of our work in 2024 are shown on the separate sheet of undertakings. The effects of the pandemic have now worked through the system, so the statistics reflect the new normal.

Volunteers

The total number of volunteers rose again in 2024 which is very pleasing, but sadly the number of driver volunteers did not. Whilst our volunteer retention remains high, we always lose some and they are all missed. This year Martin Howarth, escorted shopping minibus driver retired after 10 years. At this meeting, we are also losing Catherine Mills, who has volunteered since 2008 and managed our office so well for so many years. I wish them both well in their post-LVC life.

In December, 23 volunteers attended the drinks event and had the chance to meet others face-to-face.

Transport

Requests for transport were slightly up at 448 which, given the loss of one driver, put pressure on all the others. The number of drives for which we could not find a driver remains the same at 55. This is too high. Tina Robinson, Transport Section Leader is to be thanked for processing the new drivers we did attract and for liaising with the hospitals, often a thankless task.

Good Neighbour

The number of people we help with shopping and prescription collection has remained much the same as last year. Many of the telephone befriending arrangements which were set up during Covid still carry on, though most are not now weekly.

Escorted Shopping

2024 saw another massive increase in the take-up for this service (462 times as opposed to 319 in 2023). We are now using up to 3 volunteer cars regularly. Last year there was a point when (due to Martin's retirement the future of the service hung in the balance, but Mike Millroy who co-ordinates the service, managed to recruit two more drivers. Thanks to him for all his hard work and commitment to this project and to Mandy Sherman who is now organizing the weekly list.

Social Activities

Attendance numbers for the Keep Well Club have risen significantly in 2024 (from 394 to 451). Many thanks to Carole Barrack for organizing the activities which people enjoy so much. She is ably supported by a loyal and committed team of volunteers. The numbers for the monthly Fish and Chip lunch have also increased: it is again noticeable that most attenders also receive transport support from LVC to get there. Summer outings were made to Harlow Garden Centre for lunch and Bedfords Park, Havering-Atte-Bower for afternoon tea. 25 clients went to the Toby Carvery for Christmas lunch and, again, the Hasler Foundation provided extra drivers to get people there. Many thanks to them.

IT Clinic

The number of people attending the Clinic increased last year but it was used on fewer occasions (190 as opposed to 265) than in 2023. There is a growing need for digital inclusion and we are very grateful for the students who are following the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and come to help out the regular volunteers. They come and go, but Steve Bailey and Emma Pavett have shown an ongoing commitment to this service for many years. Thanks to them.

Garden Rescue

The team, ably led by Manon Dixon carried out 9 rescues in 2024, an 80% increase on 2024 and worked until November to get through the requests. The team is large and fluctuating; thanks to all involved.

LVC is extremely lucky to have such a committed and well-qualified Board of Trustees. Apart from Tina and Catherine, we have Carey, who with all her experience of being a Company Secretary is a fount of knowledge and wisdom. Mike's report and accounts (which reached me 3 days after the financial year end) show our finances to be in very safe hands. Laura with her background in financial and not-for-profit services was key in our very successful financial bid-making. Our Facebook page, curated so well by Eva, has come into its own this year in reaching potential volunteers and clients. I'd also like to thank Christine Benbow for her cheery, prompt, and efficient work as our DBS checker and Sheila Byford for her meticulous minute-taking.

I shouldn't end with thanking our front-line volunteers as they are first and foremost in ensuring that our various projects continue to run and enable LVC to develop new projects. We have volunteers aged from 14 to mid-80s and they all bring something to the table – enthusiasm, experience and new ideas- which makes LVC the powerhouse of volunteering that it is. Many, many thanks to everyone.