

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

The statistics of our work in 2025 are shown on the separate sheet of undertakings. I am particularly pleased to announce that the two new programmes launched in 2025 – Coffee Time Walk and Men's Games Group - are now running successfully and sustainably.

Volunteers

The total number of volunteers rose again in 2025: particularly pleasing is the increased number of driver volunteers. In December, 25 volunteers attended the drinks event and a very convivial evening ensued.

Transport

There was a large increase in the number of requests for transport to 505 (from 448 in 2024)

The number of drives for which we could not find a driver was slightly down, but still too high.

Tina Robinson, Transport Section Leader is to be thanked for all 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 was substantially down. To some extent this was due to revising the large number of telephone befriending arrangements made during Covid.

More pertinently, LVC has not had an effective Good Neighbour Section Leader now for several years.

Escorted Shopping

2025 saw a decrease in numbers, following the huge increase in 2024. Partly this may be due to the increased use of cars when no bus driver was available: clients seem to enjoy the craic on the bus. Andrew and Steve who joined us as drivers in 2024 worked very hard last year despite personal issues for both of them. Thank you to them. Then Section Leader, Mike Millroy retired from driving in August. Luckily for LVC Mike has continued to manage the service. I'd like to thank him for his hard work over so many years which has made this service the success it is. Mike has now given notice of his intention to step down altogether. LVC will hugely miss his good sense and light touch. I also thank Mandy Sherman who manages the weekly list so effectively.

Social Activities

Attendance numbers for the Keep Well Club have risen astonishingly to 676 (from 451 in 2024). 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. The number of times drivers took people to these activities rose from 250 in 2024 to 370 in 2025.

Only one summer outing – to Capel Manor, Enfield – took place. For such outings to happen, it is important that a volunteer is also prepared to spend the time there. If you would be interested in organizing an outing, please make yourself known. 18 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

There was a significant increase in both number of people attending the Clinic and the number of times they attended. The need for digital inclusion still remains and LVC is very grateful for the students who chose the Clinic for the Volunteering Section of their D of E Award scheme and continue to help out the regular volunteers. Steve Bailey and Emma Pavett continue to lead this activity and are responsible for welcoming and friendly atmosphere which increasing numbers are enjoying on a Saturday morning. LVC thanks you again.

Garden Rescue

The team carried out 10 rescues in 2025, slightly up on last year. Manon Dixon continues to lead this section, assessing the work and the number of volunteers needed and crucially engaging residents to take part as far as they can. Many thanks to her and to the large and varied team of volunteers.

Coffee time Walk

It has been obvious since Covid that people are less inclined to go out for a walk by themselves. This project had been waiting for somebody to lead it do many months. Then May, PS and Mabel volunteered to lead the weekly wander around Staples Road and in the forest, weather permitting. I thank them heartily for their commitment to this. 22 people tried it out in 2025 and there were 189 attendances. (These are partial figures as the walk did not begin until February 2025). There is now a hard-core of about 8 walkers, several of whom walk together at other times of the week. As with all our projects, the social side is very important for wellbeing: additionally walkers have noticed increased stamina and mobility.

Men's Games Group

The Men's Games Group was launched in September 2025. Concerns about loneliness and lack of connection amongst men of all ages is well-documented, as is the fact that this demographic is hard to reach. Indeed, it has taken time to build up, but 8 people tried out the group in 2025 and there are now two or three regulars. Many thanks to volunteer David Posen who leads the group with great humanity and understanding.

It is largely thanks to these two new projects that the total number of clients using LVC Services rose from 166 in 2024 to 195 in 2026

BBC Essex

In November LVC was invited to be part of the Essex Community Advent Calendar showcasing the work of local charities. We were selected following a trawl through the Charity Commission information about charities throughout Essex so it is unsurprising that LVC stood out. It was, however, very surprising and gratifying to receive the invitation. I spoke for 5 minutes on the BBC Essex Morning Show about our work and our Facebook page shared widely by the organiser. To increase the impact several interviews with clients were posted on Facebook. The contributions were poignant and very reassuring. It's good to know that our work is so appreciated by our clients.

I am very thankful to work with a Board of Trustees with such a spread of knowledge and skills. Everyone contributes their expertise and ideas and carries out their role assiduously. The Board is always happy to welcome new members of any background. The greatest takeaway of my (almost) 40 years of involvement with LVC is that we constantly need to be checking the relevance of our work and taking account of societal changes. This is what keeps us fresh.

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.

LVC only works because our many volunteers give so generously of their time and skills. People sometimes say to me that they feel bad that they can't do more. I always say, don't worry. There are times in life when we have more time for volunteering and then, something happens and we don't. The important thing is that we do what we can when we can. Thank you so much for that.

This leads me neatly to my planned departure. In October I told the Board that I would be standing down as Co-ordinator due to health issues. You all know what a difficult decision this is for me but the time is right. I have gained so much from this marvellous organisation: indeed it has saved my sanity on at least two occasions. The fact that I'm so happy with the shape LVC is in at present makes it much easier. Fortunately there is time for a gradual handover and I'll keep you posted.

Janet Thomas
Co-ordinator