



Houghton Regis Helpers Annual Report 2023



**The King's Award
for Voluntary Service**

The MBE for volunteer groups



We are proud and delighted to announce that Houghton Regis Helpers is to receive The King's Award for Voluntary Service (KAVS) 2023. This represents a tremendous achievement and a great honour for all our wonderful volunteers, in recognition of the amazing work you do to support our community, often going the extra mile to help those in need.



12th Annual General Meeting 14 February 2024 7 p.m. Council Chamber Houghton Regis Town Council

Introduction

Welcome to the Annual Report of Houghton Regis Helpers, the local voluntary Good Neighbour Scheme set up in December 2011.

Our aim is to:

“Provide to the residents of Houghton Regis and Chalton, short term help such as transport, domestic support and household assistance, through local volunteers – and to encourage sustainability, self-help and friendship within the local community”

Since our launch 12 years ago the help and support given by our volunteers has become well established and wide-ranging and the highlight of 2023 was the announcement that we are to receive the King's Award for Voluntary Service. The award will be presented by HM Lord-Lieutenant of Bedfordshire in the Spring of 2024.

Our Organising Committee welcomes you to the Annual General Meeting and thanks you all for your support, commitment and care for the community during what has been another busy year. We hope you enjoy reading and hearing about the work of our volunteers, activities, and other highlights of 2023.

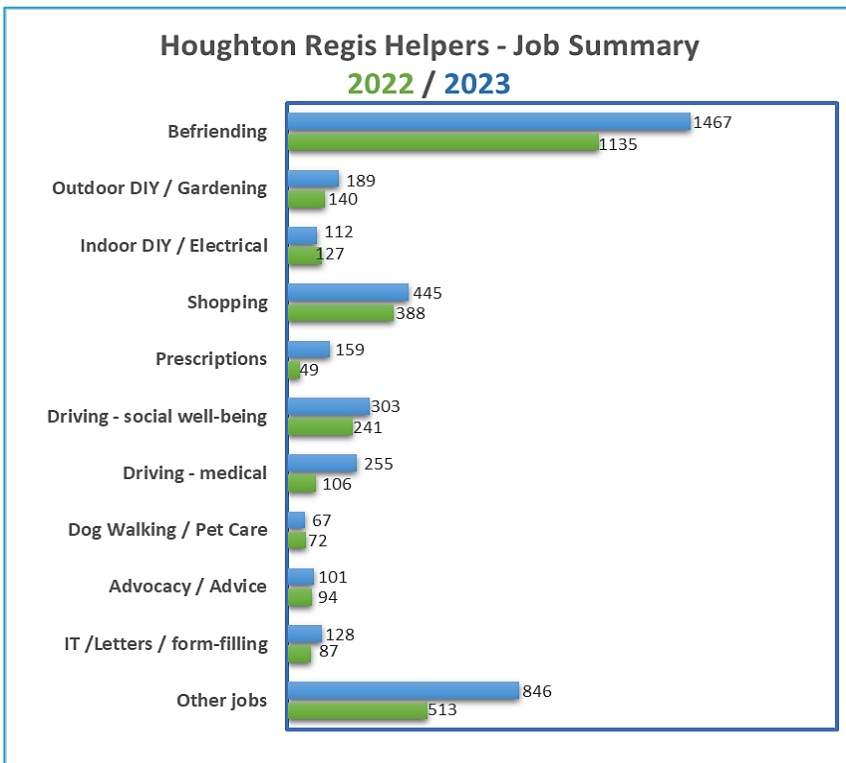
Volunteers 2023 - we welcomed Coral and Rosie as new volunteers during 2023 and welcomed back Ange. Among those who stepped down during the year, we said goodbye to founder member Betty as she moved to be near family in Lincolnshire.

We thank all volunteers who have supported Houghton Regis Helpers during the year. At the close of 2023 we had forty-two volunteers 'on the books'.

Every quarter Houghton Regis Helpers report the number of 'jobs' completed by volunteers to Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BedsRCC), the 'umbrella' organisation for Good Neighbour Schemes in Bedfordshire. The type of support and jobs volunteers carry out is wide-ranging and is summarised in the graph below.



Job Summary - the graph shows the total number of recorded 'jobs' for each category carried out in **2023** (in blue) compared to **2022** (in green).



The overall total in **2023** was 4072 jobs - a 22% increase on the previous year and another new record!

Befriending is on the increase, either through home visits or phone calls for a chat.

Gardening also increased, with 34 residents (compared to 16 in 2022) helped with lawn cutting, hedge and shrub trimming and some weeding. Volunteers, often working as a team, visited each garden an average of three times during the growing season.

Prescription collections are on the rise, partly due to a local pharmacy no longer making their own deliveries.

Clients 2023 - volunteers help residents from across all wards in Houghton Regis, including residents in the new developments in Bidwell West and Linmere, and in Chalton, our neighbouring village.

Houghton Regis Helpers supported **375** residents and households in 2023. Of these, 119 were requesting help for the first time. Requests for help and advice are received from residents themselves, from their family, or through referrals by other professionals.

In addition to the help given to individual residents, Houghton Regis Helpers responded to requests for assistance, advice and information from callers from out of the area and worked in partnership with more than 60 other professionals, other organisations and community groups, including:

- professionals in the field of health and social care, such as Adult Social Care, Family Support teams, the Well-Being teams at Titan PCN and Chiltern Vale PCN, and ELFT Mental Health team.
- the Community Partnership and Engagement Team at Central Bedfordshire Council
- Time2Connect Houghton Regis and Houghton Regis Town Council
- Dunstable Food Banks, Small Acts of Kindness Charity and Tibbs Dementia

Cost of Living Crisis

The Cost of Living Crisis Donation funding from Houghton Regis Town Council was extended to March 2024 and therefore we have been able to continue to provide extra support to struggling residents and families in these difficult times. This support has included:

- emergency food supplies;
- store vouchers for the purchase of essential provisions, including food and toiletries;
- top-ups for pre-paid meters;
- Christmas gifts for children;
- exercise books and pencils for refugee children in local hotels;
- and extras for Christmas.

Warm in Winter Bags

In the first couple of months of 2023, volunteers delivered Warm in Winter Bags donated by the charity, Small Acts of Kindness, to 30 residents. These bags were 'warmly' received and in October this year volunteers helped in packing more bags for distribution to residents over the age of 55 who are struggling in the cost of living crisis. By the end of the year we delivered a further 40 bags.



Food Bank Collecting

The partnership working with the Dunstable Food Banks continued in 2023, helping with the collection of food parcels on more than 60 occasions for individuals living alone and for families who were unable to get to the food bank themselves.



Highlights of 2023!

Pride of Houghton Awards - in February 2023 volunteers attended the Pride of Houghton Awards and had a great evening!



Cheering Volunteering - in celebration of Volunteers' Week in June 2023 Central Bedfordshire Council invited voluntary groups to attend events at the Rufus Centre in Flitwick. We were pleased to support the coffee morning event and it was good to meet up with so many other volunteers.



Training - volunteers attended in-house Safeguarding Awareness training during April and May 2023 and in July 2023 ten volunteers attended Basic Life Support and Defibrillator training.



Gardening - transforming overgrown gardens into manageable places were a highlight of our gardening teams work in 2023!





Remembrance - in November 2023 the Chair laid a wreath at the Memorial Stone on Armistice Day and a team of volunteers served refreshments in the Memorial Hall following the Remembrance Day Service at All Saints' Church.



Festive Afternoon Tea - in November 2023 forty residents attended our Festive Afternoon Tea, which we held this year at the Baptist Church. Joined by our Town Mayor, Cllr Jimmy Carroll, guests enjoyed the entertainment with the OccaZional + Band, singing along to Christmas songs. The tea was a feast of

sandwiches, cakes, mince pies and chocolates! Guests went home with a Christmas gift bag and a smile!



Committee Report 2023 - the Committee met five times during 2023 and reviewed the following policies and procedures:

- Constitution (*proposed changes to be approved and ratified by members at AGM 2024*)
- Volunteer Welcome Pack and Good Practice Guidelines
- Equality and Diversity
- Safeguarding and Protection of Adults at Risk
- Gardening Policy
- Risk Assessments

Policies and other documents can be read on our website www.houghtonregishelpers.co.uk

Committee members represented Houghton Regis Helpers at various Town Mayoral events during the year, including the Charity Dinner, Civic Service, Afternoon Tea in the Pavilion, Civic Reception, and the Carol Service and Switching on of the Christmas Lights.



Houghton Regis Helpers thank all our volunteers and colleagues for their commitment and kind support during 2023

THANK YOU TO:

- ❖ Time2Connect, Houghton Regis Town Council, Houghton Regis Baptist Church and Farmstead Community Hall for the use of premises for meetings, events and training during the year



- ❖ Linmere Estates for the generous donation of £1000

- ❖ Houghton Regis Town Council for the Grant towards the Festive Afternoon Tea for residents



- ❖ Asda and Morrisons for donations towards events



- ❖ the volunteers who raised over £2500 by delivering the Town Crier, Carnival Programmes and Fireworks event letters to households across Houghton Regis on behalf of Houghton Regis Town Council

End of Year Accounts 2023

HOUGHTON REGIS HELPERS

Year 12

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER 2023

	£		
	Unrestricted Fund	Restricted Fund Two HRTC LLSGroup	Restricted Fund Three HRTC Cost of Living Crisis
INCOME			
Donations - General	719.00		
Donations - Gardening	283.00		
HRTC (Cost of Living)			600.00
Linmere Estates	1,000.00		
Other	330.00		
HRTC (Deliveries)	2,539.64		
Sub-Totals	4,871.64	-	600.00
TOTAL INCOME (All Funds)	5,471.64		
EXPENDITURE			
Mobile phone	-	150.00	
Website / Broadband	-	230.07	
Stationery/Admin	-	403.34	
Postage	-	40.00	
DBS checks	-	29.20	
Equipment / Software	-	735.91	
Clothing/Uniforms	-	312.00	
Gardening			
Fundraising / Promotional			
Advertising	-	140.49	
Volunteer Events/AGM	-	84.80	
Christmas Event	-	453.31	
Insurance	-	332.46	
Training	-	484.69	
Other	-	391.98	
Travel reimbursement (unrestricted fund)	-	310.48	
Travel reimbursement (LLSG Restricted fund)		-	7.70
Cost of Living Crisis			-
			443.06
Sub-Totals	-	4,098.73	-
TOTAL EXPENDITURE (All Funds)	-	4,549.49	-
Surplus/Deficit		922.15	
Balance b/f 1 Jan 2023	3,162.89	190.10	
Plus income	4,871.64	-	600.00
Less expenditure	-	4,098.73	-
		7.70	443.06
Sub-Totals c/f	3,935.80	182.40	156.94
TOTAL c/f to 2024 (All Funds)	4,275.14		
Cash in Bank	4,178.10		
Petty Cash	97.04		
	4,275.14		

I hereby confirm that I have examined the books and papers for the year ended 31st December 2023, and that these accounts fairly state the receipts and payments for that period

Independent Scrutineer

Signature

R. Turner

Date

06/02/2024

With thanks to Independent Scrutineer, Roger Turner, for your diligent examination of the accounts for year ending 31 December 2023

Who We Are

Honorary Officers - elected on a two-year rotational basis

Chair and Treasurer

Vice-Chair and Secretary

Committee - elected annually

Volunteers

Interested in Volunteering? Sign up!

The Volunteer Welcome Pack and Good Practice Guidelines can be downloaded from the website or give us a call for more information!

Volunteers who engage in regulated activities working with adults are required to have an Enhanced DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) Certificate. This is free for our volunteers.

How to contact us...

By phone: **07587 004514**

Email: houghtonregishelpers@hotmail.co.uk

Website: www.houghtonregishelpers.co.uk

Facebook: **Houghton Regis Helpers group page**

By post: Houghton Regis Helpers, c/o Houghton Regis Town Council, Peel Street,
Houghton Regis, Beds, LU5 5EY



Houghton Regis Helpers

Our volunteers are here to help local residents in need

Annual Report edited by the Secretary February 2024

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