



Houghton Regis Helpers Annual Report 2025

**14th Annual General Meeting 13th February 2026
11 a.m. St Thomas' Meeting House**

Introduction from Chair, Yvonne Farrell

Welcome to the 2026 Annual Meeting and Report of Houghton Regis Helpers, our very hard working, local voluntary Good Neighbour Scheme that has been making a difference since December 2011.

At this time, we remember with fondness the contributions of Rae Bird, a founder member whose spirit will always be a part of our journey.

Our mission is simple: "To provide short-term help such as transport, domestic support, and household assistance to the residents of Houghton Regis and Chalton through local volunteers, while fostering sustainability, self-help, and friendship within our community."

Over the past years, the incredible support and dedication of our volunteers has flourished and expanded. We would like to extend a huge thank you to all of you for your unwavering support and care dedicated to the community, especially during what has once again been a very productive year.

Once again, we have witnessed an increase in the number of jobs we've taken on, thanks to our team of volunteers who work tirelessly for clients' requirements.

We went to some social events within the town during the year where we had a tombola and the infamous 'spin the wheel' for the children. Those being our recruits in several years' time! It's good to meet on these occasions and be able to get to know each other especially, for our new members.

We've also had informal coffee and chat sessions with useful training included.

Here's to another year of 'making a difference together!'

Stay well.... Yvonne



Who We Are 2025

Honorary Officers - elected on a two-year rotational basis

Chair: Yvonne Farrell (2024 to 2026) Vice-Chair: Terry Bodkin (2025 to 2027)

Treasurer: Brian Mew (2024 to 2026) Secretary: Jenny Gallucci (2025 to 2027)

Committee - elected annually: Eric Gallucci, Joan Hensbrey, Christine Lyus, Susan Thorne

Volunteers 2025

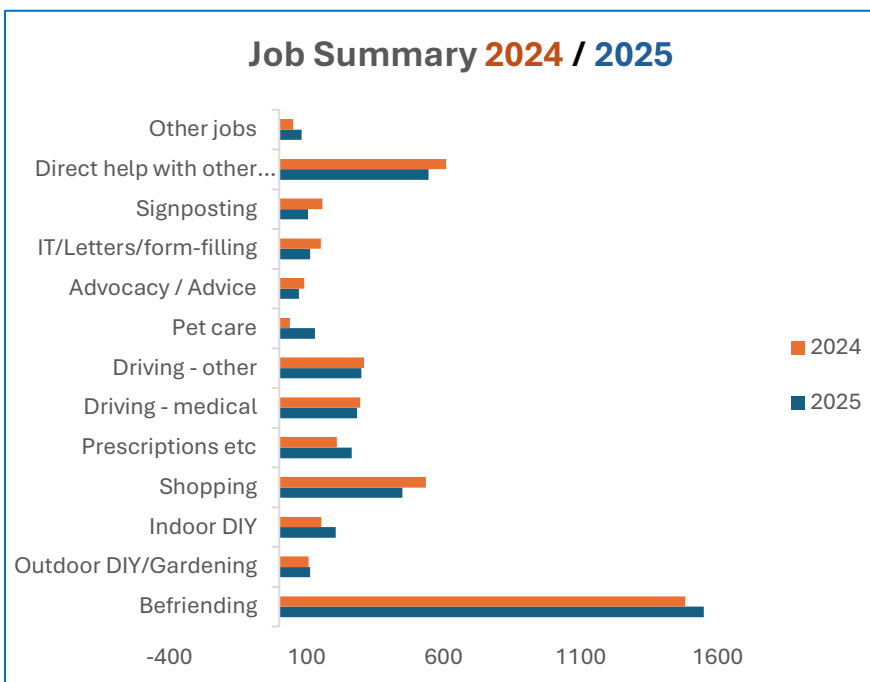
At the close of 2025 we have fifty-two volunteers signed up with Houghton Regis Helpers. We were delighted to welcome eight new volunteers during the year – Amy, Dermot, Mark, Marvee, Nick, Sandra, Toni, and Tracie.

In September it was with sadness that we announced the news that Rae Bird, our friend and founder member of Houghton Regis Helpers, had passed away, aged eighty, following several months of ill health. Rae was well-known in the community, a former South Beds District Councillor, Houghton Regis Town Councillor and former Mayor, and she gave invaluable service to our good neighbour scheme. Rae was Vice-Chair for five years and a long-term committee member, bringing a wealth of experience and local knowledge to the group. She is sadly missed by many in the community.

Volunteers enjoyed bi-monthly coffee and chat get-togethers in 2025, with guest speakers from the Community Safety Team, and fund-raising at our 'Wear it Pink' coffee morning, raising £130 for the charity **Breast Cancer Now**. We were also pleased to support the **RBL Poppy Appeal** collections at Morrisons, Houghton Regis, during the two weeks up to Remembrance Sunday, helping raise over £7000 for the cause in Houghton Regis.

We thank all volunteers who have supported Houghton Regis Helpers during the year. Some of our 2025 highlights can be viewed on page 4.

Job Summary - Houghton Regis Helpers send in quarterly reports on 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 conduct is wide-ranging and is summarised in the following graph, which shows the total number of recorded 'jobs' in **2025** compared to **2024**. The overall total in **2025** was 4210 jobs, a slight increase on 2024 and another new record.



Befriending continues to be a regular activity, through home visits, phone calls, walks, and volunteers accompanying clients to shopping, medical appointments, and other events.

Although we saw a slight fall in the number of shopping trips, volunteers continued to collect from the Food Banks regularly and supported those struggling with the cost-of-living.

The overall number of DIY jobs (both indoor and outdoor) was higher in 2025, and included repairs to doors, fitting curtain poles, hanging pictures, sorting boxes and

books, fitting bathroom appliances, as well as installing outdoor lights, key safes and gardening!

Houghton Regis Helpers thank all our volunteers and colleagues for their commitment and kind support during 2025.



Clients 2025 – Houghton Regis Helpers supported **385** residents and households in 2025, from across all wards in Houghton Regis, including residents in the growing areas of Bidwell West and Linmere, and in Chalton. Our volunteers help individuals of all ages, from a newborn baby to a 102-year-old! Although we do not work individually with children we do support several families with young children.

We receive requests for help and advice from residents themselves, from their relatives, and through referrals by other professionals. If the caller is a resident outside of our area, where possible we signpost them to the appropriate service.

During 2025, the group responded to requests for assistance, advice and information from more than fifty other professionals, other organisations and community groups, including professionals in the field of health and social care, such as Adult Social Care, Early Help teams, Well-Being teams at Titan PCN and Chiltern Hills PCN, Care agencies, and CBC Independent Living Officers.

Cost-of-Living Crisis Support

Thanks to monthly donations from Houghton Regis Town Council, we have been able to continue our support for households struggling with the cost-of-living. In 2025 volunteers delivered more than fifty store gift cards as well as emergency shopping bags to help families with food, toiletries and other essentials. In addition extra treats were distributed for Christmas and 20 Christmas gift bags for young children were delivered.



Quote from a resident: 'Can I just thank all the helpers for your unbelievable kindness over some of the toughest years of my life! I can't return the kindness - I can just say that from the bottom of my humble heart I think of you often and pray that you all have beautiful lives ahead.'

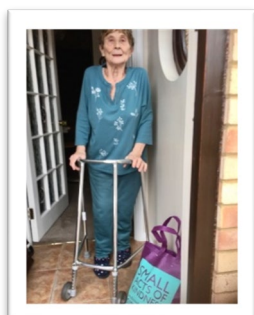


Working in partnership with the Dunstable Food Bank, volunteers collected and delivered, an average of once a week, food parcels for households unable to get to the Food Bank themselves.

Warm in Winter Bags

Donated by the charity **Small Acts of Kindness**, our volunteers delivered 70 Warm in Winter bags during November and December, helping to keep residents warm during the chilly winter months! Here is a snapshot of some of the recipients!

The smiles say it all:



Highlights of 2025!

Helping with Refreshments at local events



Legend on the Bench Feb 2025
Photo: courtesy of S Gelsthorp



Mayor's Afternoon Tea May 2025



Remembrance Sunday Nov 2025
Photo: courtesy of S Gelsthorp

Fund raising for others



RBL Poppy Appeal Collection at Morrisons Oct/Nov 2025



Wear it Pink Coffee morning, Oct 2025



Attending Events



Carnival July 2025



Volunteers' Week June 2025



Tenants Open Day Nov 2025

Coffee and Chat

Introducing our bi-monthly Coffee and Chat Get-Togethers for volunteers in 2025 has proved to be popular! Volunteers often work on their own and the opportunity to meet up to socialise, share experiences and have a chat is welcome.

Guest speakers and enjoying a summer afternoon in Houghton Hall Park:



Christmas Afternoon Tea 2025

13th December 2025 saw the return of our ever-popular Christmas Afternoon Tea for clients we support throughout the year!

With thanks to our sponsors, **The Houghton Regis Together-Fund** (HRCD and Peabody) and **Morrisons**, sixty guests and volunteers enjoyed a festive tea and a sing-along and entertainment from **The OccaZional Band**. A visit from Santa and Mother Christmas with a sack of gifts ended a fun afternoon!



MORRISONS



‘Thank you for a wonderful afternoon’

‘I didn’t know whether to come as I can’t hear very well but I am so glad I did’

‘Thank you for organising this for us, it has been lovely’



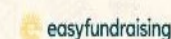
‘I enjoyed the singalong and the people on my table were lovely’

Committee Report 2025 - the Committee met six times during 2025 and drew up a new Use of Phone Policy and a Health and Safety Policy. The Committee also reviewed the following policies and procedures:

- Equality & Diversity Policy
- Gardening Policy
- Risk Assessment of Activities

Policies and other documents can be read on our website

www.houghtonregishelpers.co.uk



The Committee agreed to sign up for fund-raising with **easyfundraising** -

You can raise FREE donations for Houghton Regis Helpers when you shop online!

We thank St Thomas’ Meeting House; Houghton Hall Park; Houghton Regis Town Council; and the Baptist Church for the use of venues during 2025 and for your continuing support.



HOUGHTON REGIS HELPERS **Year 14**
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER 2025

| | Unrestricted Fund | Restricted Fund Two HRTC LLSGroup | Restricted Fund Three HRTC Cost of Living Crisis | Year 13 2024 |
|---|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| | £ | £ | £ | £ |
| INCOME | | | | |
| Donations - General | 878.19 | | | 1,223.19 |
| Donations - Gardening | 185.00 | | | 85.00 |
| HRDC Grant | 600.00 | | | - |
| HRTC (Cost of Living) | | | 720.00 | 690.00 |
| HRTC (Deliveries) | 594.00 | | | 2,540.66 |
| HRTC (Other) | 250.00 | | | 550.00 |
| Fundraising | 272.00 | | | 211.50 |
| Easyfundraising | 17.09 | | | - |
| Sub-Totals | <u>2,796.28</u> | - | 720.00 | <u>5,300.35</u> |
| TOTAL INCOME (All Funds) | <u>3,516.28</u> | | | <u>5,300.35</u> |
| EXPENDITURE | | | | |
| Mobile phone | - 120.00 | | | - 150.00 |
| Website / Broadband | - 225.06 | | | - 412.12 |
| Stationery/Admin | - 376.20 | | | - 582.55 |
| Postage | - 29.35 | | | - 40.60 |
| DBS checks | - 125.60 | | | - 139.30 |
| Equipment / Software | - | | | - 131.33 |
| Clothing/Uniforms | - 761.40 | | | - 894.00 |
| Fundraising / Promotional | - 69.11 | | | - 78.69 |
| Advertising | - 91.63 | | | - 392.99 |
| Volunteer Events/AGM | - 191.33 | | | - 932.07 |
| Christmas Event | - 432.62 | | | - |
| Insurance | - 436.72 | | | - 377.33 |
| Training | - | | | - |
| Other | - 240.00 | | | - 160.00 |
| Travel reimbursement (unrestricted fund) | - 122.10 | | | - 218.90 |
| Travel reimbursement (LLSG Restricted fund) | | - | | - 6.60 |
| Cost of Living Crisis | | | - 866.46 | - 461.12 |
| Sub-Totals | <u>- 3,221.12</u> | - | - 866.46 | <u>- 4,977.60</u> |
| TOTAL EXPENDITURE (All Funds) | <u>- 4,087.58</u> | | | <u>- 4,977.60</u> |
| SURPLUS/DEFICIT(-) | - 571.30 | | | 322.75 |
| Balance b/f 1 Jan 2025 | 4,036.27 | 175.80 | 385.82 | |
| Plus Income | 2,796.28 | - | 720.00 | |
| Less Expenditure | - 3,221.12 | - | - 866.46 | |
| Sub-Totals c/f | <u>3,611.43</u> | <u>175.80</u> | <u>239.36</u> | |
| TOTAL c/f to 2026 (All Funds) | <u>4,026.59</u> | | | |
| Cash in Bank | 3,904.41 | | | |
| Petty Cash | 122.18 | | | |
| | <u>4,026.59</u> | | | |

I hereby confirm that I have examined the books and papers for the year ended 31st December 2025, and that these accounts fairly state the receipts and payments for that period.

Independent Scrutineer

Signature

Rtt Turner

Date

16/01/2026

With thanks to Independent Scrutineer, Roger Turner, for your diligent examination of the accounts for year ending 31 December 2025.



INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR YEAR 14 YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER 2025

Summary 2025

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Total Income | £3,516.28 |
| Total Expenditure | <u>£4,087.58</u> |
| Deficit | £571.30 |
| Balance b/f 1 January 2025 | <u>£4,597.89</u> |
| Balance c/f 31 December 2025 | <u>£4,026.59</u> |

Key Points

Income

Total income is just under £1,800 less than in 2024, primarily as a result of Houghton Regis Town Council discontinuing deliveries of the Town Crier and Carnival Programmes after delivery of the Town Crier in March 2025. For 2026, this change will result in a reduction in income of around £2,500 per year. HRTC continues to provide very welcome ring-fenced Cost of Living Crisis funding at a level of £60 per month, and further funding, including an element for administration, will be provided next year via HRTC from Central Bedfordshire Council's Household Support Fund. It is important that the Helpers explore other funding opportunities and fundraising activity.

Grant applications have recently been made to charitable funds administered by BLCF to purchase a stock of uniforms. The Helpers are grateful to HRCDC for a generous donation of £600 which enabled the Christmas Afternoon Tea to go ahead. Thanks are also due for the donations from individuals, and for the Warm in Winter bags supplied by the Small Acts of Kindness charity.

Expenditure

Total expenditure is nearly £900 less than in 2024, primarily as a result of the fact that 2024 featured one-off expenditure associated with the King's Award for Voluntary Service. Other items of expenditure have tended to remain at broadly the same level as previous years.

The accounts have been examined and signed off by our independent scrutineer, Roger Turner.

Brian Mew, Treasurer, Houghton Regis Helpers
22 January 2026

Newsletter

We issue a Bi-Monthly **E-News** newsletter – full of news, activities, photos, facts and figures, training, useful information, and local community events.

Why not sign up to add your name or organisation to the mailing list!

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 must 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 2026

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