



# Houghton Regis Helpers E-News



*E-News is the bi-monthly newsletter produced by Houghton Regis Helpers*

Volume 12 Issue 2: March / April 2026

## Welcome to our Spring Issue!

### Letter from the Chair

Dear friends

What a pleasure it is to sit down with a cup of tea and write to you again this month. Around town, the days are gradually lengthening, and the warmth in our community never seems to fade. Our volunteers have been out and about as always — sharing smiles, lending hands, and reminding us how much good can come from simple acts of kindness.

We've had some lovely achievements recently. New volunteers have joined our Helpers team, bringing fresh energy and big hearts with them. Several of you have told us how much you appreciated the winter check-ins, and it's been wonderful to hear those stories. Moments like these remind us why we do what we do and why we do it. We've had a couple of friendly gatherings along with some practical support sessions that we hope will make life a little easier as the season rolls on. There's plenty to look forward to as well. You'll find all the details further down!

For now, just know that we're thinking of you, and we're grateful to be part of such a caring town. Until next time, take good care of yourselves and each other.

Very best wishes,

Yvonne Farrell, Chair of Houghton Regis Helper

### Inside this Issue

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**Our volunteers are here to help residents in need in Houghton Regis and Chalton**

**Interested in volunteering?  
Contact us by phone, email,  
Facebook or visit our website and download  
our Volunteer Welcome Pack!**



## Annual General Meeting

We held our 14<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2026, attended by twenty-four volunteers and guests, including Simon Patterson from BedsRCC, Cllr Susan Goodchild, Cllr Tracey McMahon, and Roger Turner (Independent Scrutineer).

The Annual Report for 2025 was presented by the Secretary – you can read an extract from the report on the next page!

The End of Year Accounts were presented by the Treasurer, independently examined by Roger Turner. Members approved the accounts.

Proposed changes to the Constitution were unanimously approved, with one amendment. Elections for the role of Chair and Treasurer (to hold office from 2026 to 2028) were held, and for Committee members for 2026.



## Committee and Honorary Officers 2026



*Back row, left to right:*

**Committee members**

Sue Thorne, Eric Gallucci, Christine Lyus, Gaye Lewis, Ken Jones. (absent – Joan Hensbrey)

*Seated, left to right:*

**Honorary Officers**

Brian Mew (Treasurer), Yvonne Farrell (Chair), Jenny Gallucci (Secretary), Terry Bodkin (Vice-Chair)

## Volunteer News



We welcome Ken who joined us as a volunteer at the beginning of the year – and has already been busy doing DIY jobs, collecting prescriptions and attending training!

We currently have 52 volunteers signed up – Belinda resigned in January as she has moved away and we wish her all the best.

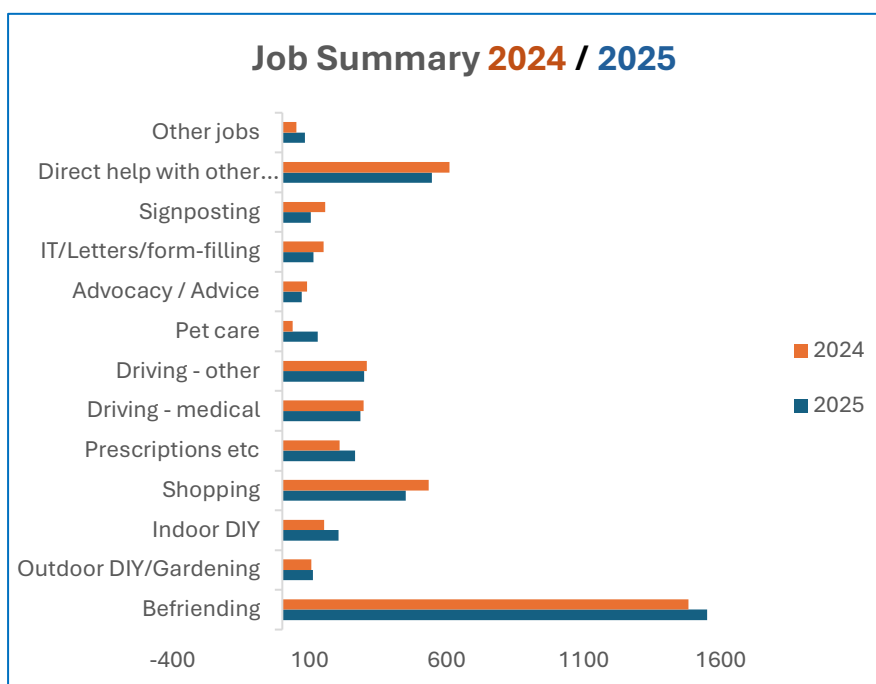
We are delighted to finally be able to report that the volunteers who supported the Poppy Appeal collection at Morrisons in Oct/Nov 2025 helped raise over £7000 in Houghton Regis – well done on a tremendous effort and for putting in so much time over the two weeks.

## Extract from Annual Report 2025

*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.

*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.



The full report is available on the website [www.houghtonregishelpers.co.uk](http://www.houghtonregishelpers.co.uk)

## Volunteer Events and Training

Sixteen volunteers attended in-house **Level 1 Safeguarding (Adults at Risk) Awareness** training in January 2026. Safeguarding training is essential for new volunteers, and we encourage all volunteers to attend a refresher session at least every two years.

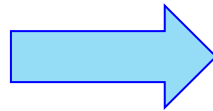
A total of twenty-six volunteers attended Health and Safety training following



the review of our Risk Assessments and introduction of a new Health and Safety Policy. Further dates for Safeguarding Awareness training and Health and Safety are being planned for the coming months – look out for details soon!



### **COMING UP** **Coffee and Chat**



Easter Surprise Get-Together!  
Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March 11 am at St Thomas' Meeting House

### **BASIC LIFE SUPPORT TRAINING**

You are invited to attend **Basic Life Support (Emergency First Aid) training** on

**Saturday 18 April 2026**

**10 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.**

**Venue:** Baptist Church, Hammersmith Gardens, LU5 5RG

**Training Provider:** ALR Training Limited

**OR**

**Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2026**

**10.30 am to 1 pm**

**Venue:** St Thomas' Meeting House, Lowry Drive, LU5 5SJ

**Training Provider:** ABC Life Support

**The training is FREE for Houghton Regis Helpers volunteers and hot drinks and biscuits will be provided.**

**PLACES ARE LIMITED to 12 per session and there are only a few places left!**

Please contact Jenny on [houghtonregishelpers@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:houghtonregishelpers@hotmail.co.uk) or phone 07587 004514 to book a place

**Coffee and Chat!**

**Volunteers!**

Join us for an **Easter Get-Together, Coffee and Chat!**  
**Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2026**  
11 am to 12.30 pm  
Where?  
St Thomas' Meeting House  
Lowry Drive, LU5 5SJ

Hot drinks and Easter Treats!

Surprises!  
Everyone Welcome!

Email: [houghtonregishelpers@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:houghtonregishelpers@hotmail.co.uk)

**HOUGHTON REGIS HELPERS**  
07587 004514

## Fund-raising!

We have signed up with Recycle4Charity!



Find us at [Recycle4Charity](https://www.recycle4charity.com)

Recycle4Charity is a free and accessible used ink cartridge programme, that helps its thousands of members raise funds for charity and non-for-profit organisations. Cartridges are either:

Remanufactured: emptied and/or cleaned, refilled with ink, sealed and packed

or Recycled: broken down into raw materials

**You can send in your ink cartridges by printing a free shipping label, order a free collection box or Drop off at our Public Location Point at...**

Houghton Hall Park Visitor Centre  
Park Road North  
Houghton Regis  
Dunstable  
Bedfordshire  
LU5 5FU

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## You can help us raise funds when you shop online too!

Please use easyfundraising EVERY time you shop online. Over 8,000 brands will donate to Houghton Regis Helpers for FREE when you use easyfundraising to shop with them, so you can support us no matter what you're buying! If you haven't signed up yet, it's easy and completely FREE. Visit:

[https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/houghton-regis-helpers/?utm\\_source=whatsapp&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_campaign=pmc&utm\\_content=wa-2](https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/houghton-regis-helpers/?utm_source=whatsapp&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=pmc&utm_content=wa-2)

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A promotional graphic for easyfundraising. At the top, the "easyfundraising" logo is shown. Below it, the text "You spend, retailers donate" is displayed in a large, bold font, with "retailers donate" underlined. The background is a light purple gradient. At the bottom, there is a dark blue button with the text "Sign up and get started".

easyfundraising

**You spend, retailers donate**

Sign up to easyfundraising and see your favourite retailers donate to

**Houghton Regis Helpers**

whenever you shop with them

**Sign up and get started**



### Thank you to:

- Houghton Regis Town Council Small Grant donation of £200 towards our Basic Life Support Training
- Cllr Yvonne Farrell for the Ward Councillor Grant of £500 for uniform purchases, stationery and promotional merchandise



Houghton Regis has been allocated a limited amount of **Household Support Funding (HSF)** from Central Bedfordshire to support vulnerable households in the town who are **struggling to afford** items such as **food, energy and water bills**, or wider essentials such as **toiletries, winter clothing or small kitchen appliances**.

**E-vouchers** will be **available** for those who have access to an email and smart phone, or **we will provide store vouchers** for those **without internet access** or who **struggle with IT**. **Help** can also be provided **with other costs**, such as **energy top-ups** for those with pre-pay meters.

**Who is eligible to receive support?**

Eligibility is for **any household with children / pensioners / disabled resident / and other vulnerable people** such as those in temporary accommodation. Those on benefits are not affected if they get a payment from the HSF scheme.

The funding is **only available until the end of March 2026** and we would like to help as many households in our community as possible.

If you are **interested**, or **know someone who may be**, in exploring whether you or they could **benefit from this fund**, please do **get in touch** with:  
**Houghton Regis Helpers:** email [houghtonregishelpers@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:houghtonregishelpers@hotmail.co.uk) or call **07587 004514**  
**Jewels:** See us in Bedford Square, email [jewelshoughtonregis@gmail.com](mailto:jewelshoughtonregis@gmail.com), or call **07402 430624**.

Households may also contact their nearest food bank when they require emergency support

\*Voucher cannot be used to buy alcohol, fuel, lottery tickets or tobacco.

## Household Support Fund

In December 2025 we were invited by Houghton Regis Town Council to work with other partners in the community to distribute a limited amount of Household Support Funding (HSF) to struggling households in Houghton Regis, being allocated by Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC). Other partners are Jewels in Bedford Square, Tithe Farm School and Thomas Whitehead School.

After meetings and discussions, a plan was presented to CBC in January - Houghton Regis Helpers agreed to a proposal to receive £1.5K in supermarket E-Vouchers (=100 vouchers @ £15 each, max £60 per household up to 4 people) and £1K in cash to help those without IT or find technology difficult. The time limit was a factor in deciding on the funding allocations as the money must be spent by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026.

The Town Council designed a leaflet for circulation and our £1.5K was finally allocated to E-Vouchers by CBC in early February, with the result that the 100 vouchers were distributed to 41 households within 10 days! We approached CBC for additional funding for E-Vouchers and to date we have received £6K. This equates to 400 supermarket vouchers which have been distributed so far to 130 households with a total of 196 adults and 318 children!

We have also supported twenty-five families through the £1K HSF cash with additional costs including: energy meter top-ups, winter clothing, small kitchen appliances, and other household items and food essentials. Thank you to the volunteers who have helped with the distribution – these kind comments from residents show how much the support is appreciated.

### How to contact us

By phone: **07587 004514**

Email:

[houghtonregishelpers@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:houghtonregishelpers@hotmail.co.uk)

Website:

[www.houghtonregishelpers.co.uk](http://www.houghtonregishelpers.co.uk)

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

Good morning can't thank you enough for the vouchers for food shopping this is a huge help to our family.

Oh thank you so much we really appreciate it 😊

Thank you so much, I was literally down to my last ten pounds till payday.

I just wanted to say thank you again and how much I appreciate the support!

Thank you for the money for electric on my meter.

Thank you so very much for all the vouchers! It's a massive help and we are very grateful.

How can I thank you for the vouchers, this will definitely make a big difference to our family. Thank you doesn't seem enough.