

The Volunteer

Spring 2025

A message from Kirti

Volunteer Leader Kirti Mistry



Spring has finally sprung and I hope that the warmer weather is here to stay. I hope you had a great Easter, whether you were taking a much-needed break or spending time with friends and family. I've heard about lots of VE day celebrations taking place across Bolton so please let us know about any activities or events you held with your groups and we'll feature them in the next newsletter. As ever, if you had any other exciting news, whether it's big birthday or an event or fundraiser, please let me know. Over the last 3 months I have been working on updating our volunteer records as well as fine tuning our recruitment process so haven't been out in the community as much as I was before Christmas. We will be reopening our recruitment soon as we have a number of exciting opportunities coming up, so if you are interested in a new role or know anyone who might be, please get in touch.



Hello from the Chief Executive

Chief Executive Lauren McKechnie

As we move through spring with renewed energy, I want to take a moment to reflect on the incredible role our volunteers play in the life of Age UK Bolton. Every conversation you hold, group you support, form you fill in, or smile you offer makes a difference—not only to us as an organisation, but to the thousands of older people across our borough who benefit from your time, compassion and care. Without you, we quite simply couldn't do what we do.

Age UK Bolton continues to evolve, with bold ambitions to become a blueprint for what the very best local charity can look and feel like—not just for the people we support, but for those who work with us, volunteer alongside us, and champion our mission. Thanks to Kirti and the wider team, we're continuing to improve the volunteer experience—but your feedback remains essential, so please keep sharing your thoughts and ideas with us.

There's a lot happening across the organisation: we're undertaking deep work to strengthen our services and support, and playing a leading role in the rebranding and promotion of Brand Bolton—a place-based initiative bringing new skills, investment and opportunity into this incredible town we're proud to call home. There's much to be done—but equally, much to be proud of. I'm so glad each and every one of you is part of this journey.

With heartfelt thanks for your energy, dedication, and belief in our work,

Lauren McKechnie, CEO, Age UK Bolton

Welcome to our new volunteers

Four new volunteers have joined us since January 2025

Graham Whitmore was the first volunteer to join us in January 2025. He shares why he started volunteering with Age UK Bolton:

I am 56 years old and have recently taken early retirement after 33 years working for Lloyds Bank and the following 5 years at Aon Insurance. As part of my plans for retirement, I wanted to include some time for volunteering or charitable work of some kind. Form-filling and administration was integral to the various roles I've undertaken throughout my career and I'm used to dealing sensitively with people and clearly explaining things which, to many, may seem complicated.

In recent years, I lost both of my elderly parents and, before and after their passing, my brother and I became well-versed in all sorts of admin required for their day-to-day living such as benefits claims, utilities, insurance, carers and various other support services. This, together with my work experience, seemed to link in perfectly when the opportunity arose to join Age UK's Information and Advice Team in Bolton.

In my spare time I like travelling, socialising, going out walking and (for my sins) I have a season ticket as a supporter of Manchester United.

We also welcomed new volunteers at some of our Ageing Well activities and in Befriending:

- Martin Wood is now running the scrabble group at Harwood Library
- Susan Dale has joined us as a Befriender
- Chris Brooks is helping Barbara Pritchard at the card-making group in Brightmet library



Volunteers' Week: models needed!

Get involved with our Volunteers' Week 2025 celebrations

Plans are underway for our Volunteers' Week event on **Thursday 12th June** and the theme for this year is **Making Waves**. We'll be holding a fashion show and will need some models to show off their beach themed or tropical outfits (which we hope will keep the sun shining and get us ready for the Summer)!

If you fancy yourself as the next Twiggy or Jean Shrimpton and want to strike a pose on the catwalk, please contact Kirti on **07377 709499** or let us know when you respond to your invitation.

Learning at Work Week 2025

Pick up a new skill or hobby - no matter your age!

It's never too late to learn a new skill or take up a new hobby! Bolton College are holding an event on **Monday 19th May** at **All Souls Church in Astley Bridge**, where you can try out some taster sessions and find out about the courses they offer.

There will also be a clothes swap where you can bring clothes you no longer wear and exchange them for another item, or learn how to alter and mend your clothes so that you can hold onto them for longer. Free lunch will be provided.

If you'd like to attend, please contact Christina Barron-Palk by emailing her on christina.barron-palk@boltoncc.ac.uk.



News from clubs and groups

What's been going on in Age UK's volunteer-led clubs and groups

🌟 Wild & Woolly knitting group thanks Longsight Lodge

We received a call from Joan Manville of Longsight Lodge, thanking the Wild and Woolly knitting group for the rose they sent her. The gift was a thank-you for making the group feel so welcome at Longsight Lodge whilst Harwood library was being refurbished for 6 weeks.

🌟 Windsor Road cooks up a storm with new oven

A new oven at Windsor Road lunch club has helped our volunteers cater for 80-90 diners per month. The club, based at Windsor Road Community Centre in Bromley Cross, is ran by Christine and Stephen Toothill, supported by a group of regular volunteers.

If you have any news from your volunteer club or group that you'd like to share, please let Kirti know on 07377709499 or volunteering@ageukbolton.org.uk



Staff Spotlight: David Leigh

Energy Advisor David shares how you can save on your energy bills



David Leigh is our Information and Advice Officer who specialises in helping to reduce or keep your energy bills down.



I estimate that **90%** of clients that I see haven't changed their energy tariff for years and are paying an unnecessary premium on Standard Variable Tariffs (SVT). These tariffs are subject to the dreaded Energy Price Cap so have seen total price hikes of 15% since October 2024. If I do nothing else for you, I can at least ensure you switch to **cheaper fixed tariffs**, saving hundreds of pounds per year. Who doesn't want that, right?



To make an appointment to see David to review your energy bills, please call **01204 382411** and he will contact you as soon as possible.

- **What does your role involve?**

I'm the sole member of the Energy Advice Team and the role can be incredibly varied. I do lots of home visits to our clients resolving issues ranging from billing problems, smart meter issues, tariff upgrades, switching suppliers and many resulting change of supply issues, crossed meter issues, general energy efficiency advice, applications for energy funding schemes.

- **What do you enjoy outside of work?**

Live gigs. My favourite music tends towards the relatively obscure Prog and Psychedelic genres so I end up in tiny clubs up and down the country. I need at least two gigs per month to satisfy my cravings! I also love exploring ancient and medieval sites, stone circles, castles etc.

Tell us an interesting fact about you! I came second in a beautiful baby contest in 1967 which I used as a launch-pad for my subsequent glittering modelling career (*cough*).

- **What is your favourite...**

Food: I'm lucky enough to have travelled extensively and have developed a love for Indian and South East Asian cuisine. Unfortunately, I can't cope with mega-hot curries as much as I used to. I'll take rice over potatoes every day of the week, though.

Drink: I'm 90% teetotal these days, the remaining 10% would always include Irish Stout. Most of the 90% is taken up with Assam tea or good old Corporation Pop!

Book: I'm not sure I have a nailed-on favourite book. I've recently re-read a couple of Milan Kundera's novels and have just started an old Mick Farren memoir with the glorious title of "Give The Anarchist A Cigarette! I devour non-fiction books related to medieval and ancient history and plan on being an archaeologist in my next life!

Favourite record: If I had to pick one album it would be the "Silent Dance" album by a band called Solstice (Hippy, Folk, Prog Rock). It was released in 1984 and had a profound impact on my 19-year-old self. I've requested the opening track "Peace for The New Age" be played at my funeral (though obviously not for another 50 years)!

Volunteer opportunities

Looking for a new volunteering role? Check our listings below

Age UK Bolton office, Bolton town centre

- **Admin Assistant**

Help us with administrative tasks at our head office. Must have good computer skills.

- **Reception Volunteer**

Do you have excellent people skills? Help with general enquiries at our Bolton office reception.

- **Admin Assistant (Strength and Balance referrals)**

Help to input Strength and Balance referrals into our online system. Basic computer skills required.

Ageing Well Centre, Farnworth

- **Digital Drop-in Volunteer**

Help us deliver our new digital drop-in service, assisting people to use computers and tablets.

- **Volunteer Handyman**

Are you good at fixing things? Perhaps you could help to take care of the Ageing Well Centre!

- **Reception Volunteer (Thursday morning)**

Do you have excellent people skills? Help out at our Farnworth reception desk once per week.

- **Friendship Cafe Volunteer**

Could you help to make teas and coffees at our Friendship Cafe once a month?

Community-based roles

- **Kitchen Assistant at Hulton Lunch Club**

Help make and serve hot lunches at Hulton Lunch Club, based at Hulton Lane Community Centre.

- **Befriending Volunteer**

Befriend a lonely older person in the community by visiting them once per week for a chat.



A fond farewell to Pat Kitchen

Saying goodbye after 9 years at Age UK Bolton

At the end of March we said goodbye to Pat Kitchen, our long standing Deputy Chief Executive. Pat has been at Age UK Bolton for 9 years after starting as a volunteer back in 2015. She is not pursuing other ambitions elsewhere, spending time with friends and family, and travelling.

Pat said: "Giving dignity, independence, and companionship back to those whose lives could be so very different, without everyone's considerable and incredible efforts, is such invaluable time well spent."

If you would like a printed copy of this newsletter, please contact us on 01204 382411.