

THE BRIDGE
Volunteer Newsletter

Summer 2026

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough age UK
Let's change how we age

Welcome to Our Volunteer Community

At Age UK Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, we are proud to be supported by an incredible community of volunteers who make a real difference every single day. Across our region, more than **370 volunteers** generously give their time, skills, and compassion to help older people feel connected, supported, and valued. Whether it's offering companionship through **Sharing Time**, lending a friendly voice as a **Telephone Befriender**, or helping bring joy and activity into our **Day Services**, every volunteer plays a vital role in enhancing later life for older people in our communities. our services span across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, reaching older residents wherever support is needed.

Volunteering with Age UK Cambridgeshire & Peterborough is not only meaningful for those we support; it's also deeply rewarding for the volunteers themselves. Many tell us that being part of this community enriches their own lives, strengthening social connections, building friendships, and offering a real sense of purpose. As we begin this edition of **The Bridge**, we want to extend a heartfelt *thank you*. Your time, kindness, and commitment help combat loneliness, promote independence, and create moments of joy for the older people we serve. Every call made, every visit offered, and every cup of tea shared truly matters.

We look forward to celebrating your stories, sharing updates across our services, and keeping you connected as part of the Age UK family. Thank you for everything you do, and for being the bridge that supports our community.

In this edition

Meet the new Head of Friendships & Community Connecting and Care Home Befriending Coordinator

Updates on our services and volunteers across Cambridgeshire & Peterborough

Find out about new volunteering opportunities and new services

New! Training packages coming this summer



Welcome to Will

We are delighted to welcome **Will Sparrow** as our new **Head of Friendships and Community Connecting** at Age UK Cambridgeshire & Peterborough. Will brings a rich background in community development, having built his career across several people-focused sectors. He has worked with a national youth work charity, contributed to the education sector, and, more recently, played a key role at Mind, where he developed community inclusion initiatives and crisis-support pathways. With this blend of experience, Will has a deep understanding of how strong relationships and accessible support can transform lives, something at the heart of our volunteering and friendship services. Will shared that he is looking forward to making a positive impact and supporting Age UK Cambridgeshire & Peterborough to develop and strengthen our volunteering and friendship programmes. His passion for community connection and his commitment to improving wellbeing make him a fantastic addition to the team.

Powered by Volunteers



Last month, some of our amazing **Friendship Club Volunteer Co-ordinators** came together to share ideas, celebrate good news, take part in training, and collect helpful resources to support the wonderful clubs they run across our community. These clubs make a real difference, bringing people together, reducing loneliness, and creating warm, welcoming spaces where friendships can grow. We support several clubs in and around the Peterborough area. The clubs are independent and led by volunteers, with Age UK Cambridgeshire and Peterborough providing support and guidance. Some of these amazing groups have been running for over 20 years, with milestones coming up this and next year. We're always looking for kind, community-minded people to volunteer in an existing Friendship Club or start a brand-new club with full support from Age UK Cambridgeshire & Peterborough. If you'd like to get involved, we'd love to hear from you!



Wardens for wellbeing

Our **Community Wardens Schemes** are one of the most valued services we provide at Age UK Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, offering older people the confidence, connection, and reassurance they need to remain independent in their own homes. Through a combination of personal visits and telephone calls, our wardens provide daily contact Monday to Friday, helping ensure wellbeing, safety, and a friendly point of connection for those who may otherwise feel isolated. For a small monthly fee, service users receive support with everyday tasks such as small items of shopping, collecting prescriptions, reading post, and making phone calls on their behalf. These simple acts of help, paired with a listening ear and warm companionship, make a profound difference to quality of life, reducing loneliness and promoting independence. Our wardens bring not only practical help but a reassuring presence, often noticing changes in an older person's wellbeing and acting quickly to ensure they receive the right support. As this service continues to grow, we are now looking for Volunteer Warden Buddies to join us. Warden Buddies provide ad-hoc support, stepping in when a service user may need an additional visit or call, or when a warden needs a little extra help to meet demand. This flexible volunteering role is ideal for someone who wants to make a meaningful impact by offering companionship, reassurance, and practical light-touch support to older people in their community. If you are kind, community-minded, and able to offer a little time, becoming a Warden Buddy is a wonderful way to help sustain this vital service, and to bring comfort and connection to those who benefit most. We'd love to hear from anyone interested in joining our wardening team and helping us continue this essential work.



Hello Kirsty

With the exciting expansion of our volunteering service here at Age UK Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, we welcome Kirsty Luckham to the team as our Care Home Befriending Coordinator. Kirsty is joining the team from within the organisation, bringing with her a wealth of knowledge from her previous retail and customer service roles. She is now ready for a brand-new challenge and is excited to be part of this scheme from its very beginning. Kirsty is very much looking forward to helping shape this new service, building meaningful connections, and seeing just how successful this new scheme can be over the coming months and years.
Kirsty says she can't wait to meet residents and volunteers alike, maybe that will be you! Whether you're already part of the befriending community or thinking about getting involved, you'll find Kirsty approachable, enthusiastic, and full of ideas.



Volunteering Spotlight

For the past 15 years, Lana has been a shining light at the Bretton Friendship Club, an anchor of warmth, laughter, and community spirit. After retiring from her long career as a chef, Lana found herself widowed soon after. Seeking purpose and connection, she stepped into volunteering at the club, first cooking hearty meals for members and later taking on the role of Club Coordinator. What began as an act of giving has grown into a legacy of care that has touched countless lives.

Today, Lana leads a dedicated team of seven volunteers who work together to run the club every Tuesday from 10am until 2pm. Under her guidance, the weekly sessions have blossomed into lively gatherings filled with homemade lunches, quizzes, bingo, and much more.

"It's a real pleasure for me to do this," Lana shared. "A true pleasure, doing this for all of them. Everyone gets on, and true friendships have formed."

Her passion and steady leadership have helped the club evolve through changing times, adapting to new members, new needs, and the practical realities of running a volunteer-led group. Thanks to her commitment, the Bretton Friendship Club remains not only sustainable but thriving, offering connection, comfort, and joy to those who attend.

When asked about her most treasured memory from her years of volunteering, Lana didn't hesitate, there have simply been too many special moments to choose from. Over the years, the group has held fundraising garden parties, enjoyed coach trips, and shared countless meals out together. Yet, for Lana, the biggest reward has always been the genuine friendships that have grown within the club.

Members who once arrived as strangers now holiday together, support neighbours with meals, and help one another access important services, confidence boosted by hearing trusted first-hand experiences from fellow members. This peer support has reduced worry around seeking benefit advice or financial guidance, empowering individuals to reach out and get the help they need.

Through her kindness, leadership, and steady presence, Lana has helped shape the Bretton Friendship Club into much more than a weekly gathering. It is a true community, one built on laughter, shared experiences, and the simple but life-changing power of friendship. Her story reminds us of the incredible impact volunteers can make, not only in the lives of others but in nurturing spaces where people can connect, grow, and belong.

Stay Connected

Don't miss out on the latest volunteering opportunities, news, and events! Follow Age UK Cambridgeshire & Peterborough on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram to stay connected and inspired.

A message from the Sharing Time Team

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VOLUNTEERS' WEEK

During Volunteers' Week, we, as a team, wanted to take a moment to sincerely thank each of you for everything you do.

The time and energy you give so generously make a real and lasting difference. Whether it's a few hours here and there or a regular weekly commitment, your contribution adds up in ways that are vital to the service we provide. Quite simply, we could not do this without you.

Over the past year, your impact can be seen clearly:

You have supported 406 service users through Sharing Time and Telephone Befriending

Together, you have given an incredible 21,112 hours of your time

Our oldest service user is 103, and our oldest volunteer is 92, with the youngest being 18

Our volunteer community reflects a diverse mix, with 80% being women and 20% being men

The people we support also represent a broad age range, with 174 service users being over the age of 85

These numbers only tell part of the story, but they highlight just how meaningful your contribution is. Your dedication, reliability, and willingness to step in and help do not go unnoticed. You support not only our work but also the people who rely on it, and that impact is deeply appreciated.

Below is a quote from a family member of one of our service users. I hope this shows just what a difference you make.

"Mum is really loving her visits from Claudia. Claudia is lovely; she reminds me so much of my daughter. It's great for Mum; it really makes her day. Mum has had a lot of challenges lately coping with her memory loss. Sadly, she is finding coping a lot harder, and I'm having to help her more and more; it's heartbreaking. There's not a day that goes by that I don't cry. When I tell her that Claudia is coming over, her mood completely changes and she gets really excited, so thank you so much for the time Claudia spends with Mum. It means so much to me; it's probably the only hour in the week that I'm not sad or worried. Just that small peace of mind makes all the difference. I hope that Claudia is enjoying it and that Mum's random stories and conversations aren't too hard for her. What you and your team are doing is so wonderful, and I know that it comes from your hearts. I can't thank you enough."

Thank you for being such an important part of what we do. We are genuinely grateful for your continued support and the commitment you show throughout the year.

The Sharing Time Team



New Care Home Befriending

We are looking for volunteers to bring companionship to older people living in local care homes. Here's why it matters and how you can help.

Loneliness among older people in care settings is far more widespread than many of us realise. For residents who may go days without meaningful conversation, a regular friendly visit can be genuinely life-changing, and that's exactly what the Care Home Befriending service exists to provide.

Age UK says that 80% of care home residents report feelings of loneliness, and 60% of people in care homes receive no visitors at all.

These figures are a reminder that companionship isn't a luxury; it's a meaningful part of emotional wellbeing and quality of life. The befriending scheme works by matching volunteers with residents at local care and nursing homes for regular, friendly contact: a chat, a listening ear, and the simple reassurance of being seen and remembered.

Even just an hour of your time can lift someone's spirits, ease their sense of isolation, and remind them that they matter. Volunteers don't need any special qualifications, just warmth, reliability, and a willingness to show up.



The health impact of connection

Social isolation and loneliness can affect health in profound ways, and national figures show just how widespread this can be. Around 1 in 6 adults report feeling lonely at least some of the time, reminding us that this is not a rare experience but something that touches many people in communities across the country.

The impact on wellbeing is serious. Social isolation and loneliness are associated with increased risks of heart disease, stroke, depression, anxiety, and dementia. An American study highlighted that lacking social connection can raise the risk of premature death to a level comparable to smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day, underlining how deeply connection matters to health.

Just as importantly, supportive relationships can protect and restore wellbeing. Regular social contact helps people feel more confident, resilient, and hopeful, while strengthening their sense of belonging and reminding them that they matter to others, especially during difficult or uncertain times.

Volunteer befriending can make a major positive difference. A friendly conversation, a listening ear, and consistent contact can help someone feel seen, safer, and more connected. Through regular social interaction, volunteers can help people rebuild confidence, seek support, and stay connected to their community, showing how meaningful human contact can have a lasting impact on health, dignity, and quality of life.

Volunteering opportunities



If you are interested in any of the following opportunities, please email volunteering@ageukcap.org.uk

SHARING TIME
At-home befriending service

- Weekly visits
- Chat over a cup of tea
- Help reduce loneliness
- Create true connections

SHARING TIME
Telephone befriending

- Weekly calls
- Reduce isolation
- Help build wellbeing

NEW - CARE HOME BEFRIENDING

- Weekly visits
- Reduce isolation & loneliness
- Create community

DAY CENTRES
Volunteer helpers

- Help with activities
- Serve refreshments and chat
- Build a community

FRIENDSHIP CLUBS
Volunteer helpers

- Run activities
- Serve refreshments
- Connect people

COMING SOON - ENABLING CONNECTIONS

- Time-limited befriending
- Coach and support older people to meet goals
- Reconnect to communities

Out-of-hours contact reminder

Friendly reminder for volunteers to please make calls to the person you befriend between 8am and 7pm, Monday to Friday, and between 10am and 4pm at weekends. If you have any immediate concerns between 9am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday, please contact your Co-ordinator, your link member of staff,or the office on 01733 554963.

Outside normal office hours, please call **07977 994882**.
Following these guidelines helps to safeguard both volunteers and older people and supports the smooth running of the organisation.



Over the coming months, we will be releasing a series of updated training modules designed especially to support our volunteers in their roles. These short, practical modules will cover key topics including health and safety, understanding safeguarding, joined-up support, dementia awareness and scam awareness.

Whether you are new to volunteering or have been with us for some time, we hope these updates will help you feel even more confident, informed and supported. Each module has been created with volunteers in mind, offering clear guidance and everyday examples that can make a real difference when working with others.

By taking part, volunteers will be better equipped to stay safe, recognise when someone may need extra help, understand how different services work together, and respond with greater awareness and reassurance. Most importantly, this training will help strengthen the valuable support you already provide, helping everyone feel safer, understood and more connected.

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