

VOLUNTEER'S VOICE

festive newsletter



Welcoming you

We are thrilled to present the inaugural issue of our Volunteer Newsletter, Volunteer's Voice. This newsletter aims to capture and showcase some of the incredible support that volunteers provide to Age UK Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. In this edition, you will find inspiring stories, helpful tips, uplifting quotes, and festive images from our volunteers, along with a space dedicated to sharing what truly matters to them.

Sharing what matters to you!

As always, if you have any exciting news to share - be it a celebration, event, or a topic that holds special meaning for you - please reach out to Tamsin or me. **We would be delighted to assist in creating fun content for the next edition.**

Tamsin and I would also like to extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed to this special festive newsletter. Your stories are truly inspiring and will undoubtedly motivate many more volunteers to become a part of the Age UK Cornwall family. *Lee and Tamsin*

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"For so many people, getting from A to B seems easy, but my condition makes it impossible without help from your volunteer driver and chap on the Helpline".

Community Transport Services



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Find out more about our Volunteer roles

Our volunteers support us locally, all year round, helping to make sure older people feel included, respected, and valued. We couldn't continue to run our vital services without them.

Find your perfect volunteering role by using the links below or QR code below.

www.ageuk.org.uk/cornwall/get-involved/volunteer/

SCAN ME!



A lifetime of care and support at Govenek Hub - Teresa's Story

This story celebrates Teresa, who has been supporting clients at Govenek Hub for more than 35 years, delivering care, commitment, and enthusiasm throughout her journey. Donna, the Govenek Hub Manager, shared, *"Teresa is one of our unsung heroes; she is a foundational pillar upon which the hub's activities and clubs are built—always willing to share her time, care, and expertise."*

Teresa and Govenek Community Hub

Teresa began her volunteering journey at Govenek (Newquay Age Concern Day Centre) alongside Jo Wills in February 1989 when she was around 16 years old. She was driven by a desire to make a positive difference and help local individuals live their best lives. Teresa expressed her love for the experience by saying, *"I really enjoy the vibrant atmosphere of the hub and helping the clients; it is also great to be part of a strong team. I take pleasure in the activities and always encourage people to get involved. The reason I volunteer is the fulfillment I get from helping people connect and regain their independence"*

Teresa also said that she looks forward to going on outings with the clients and cannot wait for our first Charabanc trips this December.



"I love meeting people from different walks of life"

Why did you join Age UK Cornwall?

I started volunteering because my mum was a warden for sheltered accommodation catering to the elderly and disabled, which inspired my desire to become a caregiver as I grew up. I participated in a 'tie' scheme at the Blantyre Centre in St. Austell, and I continued my volunteer role even after that program concluded. Prior to this, I also gained some work experience at Age Concern while I was at Pencalenick School - this just fueled my desire to help people who were vulnerable and socially isolated.

Can you tell us about your experiences?

I have experienced significant changes over the years. Since my arrival here, I have acquired many new skills and met numerous wonderful people and clients. While there have been many transformations, the role of the hub has always been to help people. Adjusting to change can always be challenging, and I appreciate the comfort of familiar faces around me, and making new connections can be a bit difficult for me.

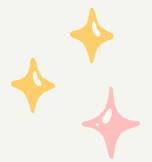
Dealing with the loss of those I've cared for, including former team members and colleagues, is emotionally taxing. However, I wake up each day with purpose and look forward to coming to work. It brings me immense joy to know that I can bring smiles to others and contribute to their happiness, ensuring they have a fulfilling day filled with laughter and joy.

I cherish listening to their stories and histories. *I often find myself reminiscing about the "good old days" with some staff and clients and the fun adventures we shared.*



"It's a joy to come to work."

Gillian's story - Volunteering locally with Falmouth Befriending



My name is Gillian Garraghan, and I am a newly appointed befriender for Age UK Cornwall. I began my volunteering journey at the Falmouth Community Hub, which I thoroughly enjoyed. However, due to my hearing difficulties, I was unable to continue in that setting - as all background noises prevent me from hearing properly. I realised that I thrive in those 1-to-1 conversations.

Thankfully, the problem was solved by Tamsin, who suggested that I could get involved with Falmouth Befriending Services instead—perfect!

Making connections with May

I was linked to a lovely lady, who lives just a short walk from my home, so there's no need for driving.

My first visit was intentionally brief, just to see if we connected and were the right fit for each other. Fortunately, we clicked almost immediately! Her name is May (short for Mavis), and she's 90 years old. Being close in age, we could easily converse on a wide range of topics.

May preferred not to have regular or scheduled visits, and I liked the flexibility of dropping by whenever I had some free time. This arrangement worked perfectly for both of us, and she didn't want me to call ahead for an appointment - I could simply show up and see if she was home.

During my next visit, it was clear we both felt the same way. We enjoyed each other's company and spent over an hour reminiscing and discussing how different the world was when we were growing up.

"We both agreed that it was much better back then!"

Raising health & wellbeing concerns

I observed that May became quite breathless while speaking between sentences. Additionally, she is deaf - *truly the blind leading the blind* - which we both found hilarious; we share the same playful sense of humor with absolutely no political correctness!

When I enquired about her breathing, she mentioned having a stent for her heart along with "other health issues," nothing, as yet, has been addressed regarding her breathlessness. She mentioned that her doctor wanted to arrange a video call, but May neither owns nor desires a smartphone. *How many older individuals have smartphones or would know how to operate them? We had quite a bit to say about that!*

Furthermore, she struggles to walk more than a few steps and only goes out when accompanied. One of her sons does live nearby, but not too close, while another son resides elsewhere.

When I returned home, I shared my observations with Tamsin. While I understand that Age UK Cornwall is not responsible for individuals' health, I feel it's essential to report any concerns we encounter.



Gillian, Falmouth Befriending

An unforgettable visit

Recently, there was a day when I visited May, but I found it impossible to get her attention and saw no signs of life in or around the lounge and her kitchen. I wandered around as much of the house as I could, only to realize it was clearly empty - unless she was still in bed. May has a cleaner who comes only on Mondays, and she struggles to hear the phone. Once, I remember that I asked her if she could hear the doorbell, to which she replied, ***“No. I have switched it off!” We both burst into laughter at that!***

I became quite concerned, knowing she wouldn't leave the house. So, I went home and messaged Tamsin in Truro, informing her that May might have either gone to her son's (who visits weekly to do her shopping) or could possibly be in the hospital. Tamsin and her team looked into it and confirmed that the latter was true.

I decided to visit May.

I went to the Reception at Royal Cornwall Hospital and provided her name, only to be told that no one by that name had been admitted - I argued a bit but got nowhere. I had left my phone in my car at the nearby shopping mall, which offered free parking. Upon reporting back, I learned that her full first name is Mavis. I then discovered which ward she was in.

A few days later, I visited Mavis, who was genuinely delighted to see me, and I felt the same. We held hands tightly, and I sat on the bed - we talked, laughed, and perhaps got a bit noisy. Then, a lovely Nurse joined us, and we all shared some light-hearted banter and laughter for a while.



Finding laughter amidst the storm

May confided in me that she has terminal breast cancer, although it's been terminal for quite some time. ***We both erupted in laughter! What else could we do? I knew I could share that moment with her.***

The heartbreaking part of this tale is that she is ready to return home but is unable to do so until they can arrange a Care Package for her, as she lives alone. Unfortunately, this might not be ready until Christmas due to staff shortages and other issues.

I promised May that I would keep visiting as often as possible and even beyond that. She thought she would never see me again! In her words, it felt like another sinking ship.

***She kindly mentioned that I bring her joy.
That's what I want to do.***

You never know, MAY could potentially become a series of stories!

***^May is now back at home and has a Care Package in place.
She also wanted to praise Treliske Hospital for “the excellent” care she received.***



The Falmouth Befriending service is based in the Age UK Cornwall Hub at the top of Killigrew Street in Falmouth. The office is staffed part time, so if you have any urgent queries, or you'd like to find out more about the Community Hub, Falmouth Befriending, or Hospital to Home services, please contact the Hub on 01326 316880 or Gateway on 01872 266383

Your Volunteering Quotes

Your driver is truly special, he always puts me at ease and makes a difficult appointment better.

Thank you for being there, hub volunteers are so important and help us all everyday!

You will never know the difference you make to my family and me.

How nice it is to have someone to talk to, I don't have any family nearby, so your befriending service really matters to me.

Helping me get on the bus, supporting me to get home safely, and checking in to make sure everything is okay - what a lovely volunteer you are.

Your top tips for winter wellbeing

We asked for your top tips for Winter Wellbeing, this is what you shared with us.



Eat well – Eat regular nourishing, hot meals including plenty of vegetables.



Stay connected - It can be really easy to 'hibernate' and Winter can sometimes make us feel isolated, especially if outdoor activities are limited.



Keep active - Try to stay as active as you can. It will help keep you warm by generating body heat, but keeping active can also boost your mood.



Ask for help - A great tip for winter wellbeing. If you are struggling to keep physically and mentally healthy during the cold season, don't be afraid to ask for help.