

International Women's Day

8th March 2026

Purvy's Story



Kindness, Purpose and starting again.

Imagine waking up to learn that you, and families like yours, have just 90 days to leave the country of your birth or face death. That's where Purvy Patel's story begins: fleeing Uganda and starting again in the UK. She often speaks about the kindness she encountered on arrival, and how that experience stayed with her, shaping a lifelong commitment to give back when she was able.

Today, Purvy is the Marketing & Communication Lead at Age UK Hillingdon, Harrow & Brent, where she leads communications, branding, and campaigns that champion older people, making sure the organisation's voice is inclusive, purposeful, and grounded in lived experience.

Beyond her role at HHB, Purvy has spent nearly 20 years volunteering, fundraising and supporting communities at home and abroad. She has served as a trustee for a charity working in Uganda and currently volunteers in roles including teaching, befriending, and supporting a local charitable farm. For Purvy, this work comes from a simple conviction: kindness matters, and in times of growing hostility, choosing it is more important than ever.

Through her work and volunteering, Purvy Patel shows how lived experience, empathy, and leadership can come together to create meaningful impact.

For Purvy, International Women's Day is a reminder that our stories matter. When women are heard, supported, and given opportunity, they don't just change their own lives, they change communities."

Sue's Story



Meet Susan Fletcher-White, the woman who builds community (and sets the table)

International Women's Day is about celebrating women who lead with heart, purpose and a healthy dose of practicality. Sue Fletcher-White is one of those women.

Sue's career has been rooted in care, community and action. With a background that spans children's health, nutrition and community support, she's always focused on making sure people don't just get by, they're properly supported. A qualified chef with a deep understanding of food, wellbeing and inequality, Sue has spent her working life turning ideas into real, lasting change.

Outside of work is where Sue's impact becomes even more personal. Every Tuesday evening, Sue and her family support the Tuesday Club at the Hockey Club in Ruislip. The group brings together men aged 30 to 85 from all cultures and backgrounds. They play hockey, then retire to the bar for food, conversation and connection. It's a friendly, welcoming group, particularly for older men and widowers, who often struggle with isolation and don't always feel able to talk about their feelings, a great boost for men's wellbeing and mental health.

Sue volunteers behind the bar, prepares meals when needed, or helps everyone pull together a shared feast, sometimes home-cooked dishes, sometimes something whipped up in the club kitchen. A big table. Everyone eating together. And occasionally, Sue joins them as the group's honorary woman. It's community at its most human.

Sue's commitment to food justice runs deep. She previously set up a holiday club to ensure children could access healthy meals outside of term time, especially when home life was tough. The project was so impactful it earned an invitation to the Houses of Parliament in recognition of its work.

When asked why she chose to work for Age UK Hillingdon, Harrow & Brent, Sue's answer is simple. When her mum lost her leg and was widowed around the same time, Sue was in her early 20's and her family was navigating an incredibly difficult period. Age Concern, as it was then, supported her mum and Sue with advice, reassurance and practical help. That support never left her.

Now, Sue gives it back, every day at work, and every Tuesday night around a crowded table. That's what leadership and inclusivity look like. And that's worth celebrating this International Women's Day.

Pam's Story



Meet Pam Smith – compassion, courage and a very cold sea.

Pam Smith is one of those people who simply gets on with it. At Age UK Hillingdon, Harrow & Brent, Pam and her team support older people at some of the most vulnerable moments in their lives, particularly those in hospital or being discharged home to an empty house. When life feels uncertain, Pam and her team bring reassurance, practical support and a listening ear.

For Pam, this work isn't just a role. It's part of who she is. She is deeply driven by one simple belief: no one should be forgotten, and everyone deserves to be heard. Whether she's helping someone navigate services, settle back at home, or feel less alone, Pam brings empathy, determination and humanity to everything she does. It's all in a day's work.

And when Pam isn't doing that, she's doing something equally brave, running into the sea in winter. Don't let the sunny photograph fool you winter sun in January is not warm.

Every year, Pam joins a group of longstanding friends who, for over 20 years, have gathered in Weymouth for a charity weekend. They travel from across the UK, pick small, lesser-known charities that need support, and raise funds through auctions of unwanted Christmas gifts and donations from local shops.

One of the highlights? The Weymouth Sea Dash in January. A countdown on the beach, a sprint into the sea, and no turning back until you're shoulder high in the water. Then a run back up the beach to get a warming beverage. Pam enjoys swimming in the sea but January, she admits, is not the best time of the year.

Somehow, every year, she also finds time to bake a Christmas cake, which is raffled by a consultant at Hillingdon Hospital, with every penny going to Age UK HHB.

So why Age UK HHB? For Pam, it comes down to people. She is passionate about supporting those facing loneliness, ill health or sudden change, especially people leaving hospital to a quiet, empty home. The work reflects her values and her belief that dignity, care and connection should never be optional.

Pam doesn't seek attention. She doesn't shout about what she does. She just shows up day after day, sea swims included.

That's commitment. And that's absolutely worth celebrating this International Women's Day.