

A Day to Remember



Our **Linking Veterans Together (LVT)** project has recently come to an end, after 2 years of aiming to **tackle loneliness** and **improve wellbeing** in older **veterans and their spouses** living in Solihull.

Joe Seager, one of the **355** people who benefited from the project, wrote the piece below after their last trip to the **National Memorial Arboretum**.

Of all the hugely popular LVT trips, the visit to the National Memorial Arboretum had a special meaning for people enjoying one of Age UK Solihull's many notable ventures to serve the interests of elderly members of the community.

The chance to see superbly crafted materials created to honour the lives of members of the armed forces enabled many of us to recall our own time in military service.

One of the guests in the coach party left his home in Trinidad to support Britain's war-time campaign in the 1940s. And no sooner had he returned from the visit to the Arboretum, than he was taken to a military base in Yorkshire to receive a medal awarded to recognize the

gallant part played by 5,000 West Indians in our war effort.

So there was good reason to thank Age UK Solihull for making the visit one to enjoy on a very high note and provide time to reflect on sacrifices made at our time of need. It was, in every sense, a day to remember.

Nothing could spoil the day, not even enormous traffic jams that kept us on the road for two hours making the short journey from Solihull to the Staffordshire home of the Arboretum.

Everything went well from the moment we arrived. A splendid meal in a room reserved for the 22 members of the group was followed by a well-accounted commentary to guide us along a train-operated system to see many of the memorial sites positioned across vast acres of a truly remarkable national centre of remembrance.

We were all pleased to give Louise (LVT Project Manager) special thanks for another wonderful LVT event—the eighth one she has organised with great care and diligence. She was again ably assisted by teams of volunteers giving up their time to help people with restricted mobility and other support needs. I hope to stay in touch with other members of the project.

Our Digital Champions project



Our **Digital Champion Project** is going from strength to strength, now offering several **digital skills courses** throughout North and South Solihull, including at

our newsletter sponsors, **Eastcote Park Retirement Village** (left).

We have also started running **drop-in sessions** that older people can bring their **smartphone, tablet** or **laptop** to for advice and support with using them.

Beth (pictured right with Volunteer, Stephen and another Digital Champion client, Paul) approached us as she wanted to **improve her confidence** with digital skills as she felt it would help her to become more **independent** and enable her to **keep in touch** with family in Ireland.

She joined one of our **friendly courses** and was issued a **tablet to borrow** for eight weeks.

During the course, Beth learned how to **access wifi, use email, search for information** and shop **online**. She now feels **confident** with online shopping and has purchased items for herself and gifts for her grandchildren. She competently **uses email** and does regular **internet research**.

Beth says, *"I would have liked a longer course because I really enjoyed it. I was made to feel at ease and everyone representing Age UK Solihull were brilliant."*

We are **so pleased** to have helped Beth gain **confidence** with her digital skills.

For more details about the project, or to find out about becoming a **Digital Champion Volunteer**, call **0121 704 7851**, email **digital@ageuksolihull.org.uk** or visit **www.ageuk.org.uk/solihull/digital-champions**



Acknowledgments

We are grateful for the support we have received from organisations including:

Asda Chelmsley Wood
Asda Parkgate
Belmont Healthcare
Birmingham Business Park
Blossomfield Grange/ Care UK
Blossomfield Rose/ Macc Care
Bluebird Care Solihull
Cakes by Adele

Capitol Mobility
CareHandle Solihull
Claridge Place Care Home
Colas Ltd
CPW
Countryside Partnerships
Crowne Plaza Solihull
Farmfoods Acocks Green

Genting Hotel, Resorts World
(The) Goodenough Charitable Trust
Home Instead Solihull
Knowle & Dorridge Lions
McCarthy Stone
Morrisons Solihull
National Grid
Rotary Club of Knowle & Dorridge

Saxon Court
Shirley Lions
Starlight hampers
Solihull Retail Park
Tesco Shirley
Wadworths Solicitors
Waitrose Solihull
We Are All Making a Difference Charitable Trust

Cynthia is up and running!



After a few setbacks, we are excited that our new **electric vehicle, "Cynthia"**, is now in use, transporting older people to activities to improve their physical and mental health.

The vehicle has been named after **Cynthia Leonard MBE**, who was one of Age UK Solihull's founders 40 years ago, and our Vice-Chair until she passed away in 2015.

Cynthia's son, **Mike Leonard**, cut a ribbon to

officially unveil the vehicle at Solihull Fire Station, where it is to be kept. Mike said, *"We were delighted to hear that Age UK Solihull has invested in this electric people carrier, named after my late mother who did so much to help improve the lives of so many people in Solihull."*

The vehicle's **charging point** was kindly sponsored by **Countryside Partnerships North West Midlands**. We are extremely grateful for this as it enables us to keep "Cynthia" charged and ready to use whenever needed.



Age UK Solihull Services

Community Advice Hubs 0121 709 7590

Benefits Service 0121 709 7592

Home Support Service 0121 704 7848

Older People's Information and Advice
0121 704 7840

Befriending 0121 704 7846

Postural Stability Exercise Service
0121 704 7845

Winter Warmth Helpline 0121 704 8080

Digital Champion Project 0121 704 7851

Stay in touch

Age UK Solihull

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Age UK Solihull Newsletter Issue 22 · Summer 2023

newsletter

Eastcote Park · Ruby Anniversary · Cynthia · Fundraising · Digital Training

Age UK Solihull is 40!



"40 years and still working hard to make Solihull a great place to grow old"

A message from our Chief Executive Officer, Anne Hastings:

Looking back over the years, it is interesting to remember that **Age Concern** had its origins during the **Second World War**, which made life more difficult for older people in many ways but also revealed their existing problems, particularly the unsuitability of the Poor Law Provision. Over the years, Age Concern's authority and influence have grown steadily at national and local levels.

1983 was the year in which the formal constitution of **Age Concern Metropolitan Borough of Solihull** was adopted. This was largely due to the efforts of a local Councillor, **Miriam Harris**, together with a Castle Bromwich resident, **Shirley Hutton**, who had already set up an Age Concern there. Over the years, the Charity has been firmly established as the **largest voluntary organisation working with and for older people** in the borough. It became a

company limited by guarantee in 1996, when it also became known as **Age Concern Solihull**. In 2009, Age Concern England and Help the Aged merged to become a new charity named **Age UK**, and Age Concern Solihull became a **brand partner**, and now trades under the name **Age UK Solihull**.

The provision of **direct services** and **campaigning to promote positive attitudes** towards older people and ageing were the aims of the first committee 40 years ago and remain our aims today. Our vision is **a world where older people flourish**, and our mission is **to improve the lives of all older people in the borough of Solihull**. We do this through a wide range of services and support and while some of these have changed over the years, what hasn't changed is the **amazing dedication** of our **staff** and **volunteer teams** to **making life better** for older and vulnerable people in the community.

We are **grateful** for all the help and support we get and look forward to the next 40 years with **hope and enthusiasm** that we will be here when we are needed. **Happy 40th Birthday to us!**

Our Ruby Celebration

We held a small celebration event in March, which was our official **Ruby Anniversary** month. The **Mayor of Solihull, Councillor Ken Meeson**, joined some of our **staff, volunteers** and **supporters** at our head office at The Core, Solihull Library.

The Mayor said, *"It was a pleasure to join Age UK Solihull to celebrate their 40th anniversary. The charity has done some fantastic work over the past 40 years,*

and that work is increasing as Solihull has an older than average population, and issues like the coronavirus pandemic and the cost of living crisis have exacerbated problems faced in later life. Well done Age UK Solihull – keep up the good work."



What's coming up



Ruby anniversary celebrations

Our **40th anniversary celebrations** are running throughout the year, and there are plenty of ways you can get involved. You could sign up to **Challenge 40** and get sponsored to do an activity based around the number 40. Or why not become a **Ruby Donor** and **donate £40 a year** to help us to run our services? Find out more at www.ageuk.org.uk/solihull/we-are-40

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) Thursday 15 June

We've teamed up with **Solihull Safeguarding Adults Board** to raise awareness and funds to support our work in **supporting vulnerable adults**. Wear or do something **purple** for the day and make a small donation to Age UK Solihull. Together, let's stamp out elder abuse. www.ageuk.org.uk/solihull/weaad

Slip Into Slippers Friday 30 September

Wear your slippers for the day to mark **International Day of Older Persons**, and donate to Age UK Solihull. Find out more at www.ageuk.org.uk/solihull/slip-into-slippers

Our new Chair



Welcome to our **new Chair of Trustees, Sally Tomlinson**. Sally joined our Board six years ago after watching her father suffer with vascular dementia and wondering how they would have managed if she hadn't lived locally. **Giving back** is important to her and she strongly believes that Age UK Solihull makes an **enormous difference** to older people's experiences.

We would like to thank our outgoing chair, **David Mattocks**, for the **wonderful job** he has done over the last 6 years. We are pleased that David remains a member of our Board.

Goodbye CB shop

We are sad that our **charity shop** in Castle Bromwich closed in April after 30 wonderful years.

Thank you to all our **amazing staff, volunteers and supporters** who made the time we had the shop so special.

We now have just one shop, located at **89 Hobs Moat Road, Solihull B92 8JL**. This shop is going from strength to strength, with plenty of brilliant bargains to be found. We hope to see you there!

Please note, the Age UK shop in Shirley belongs to the national charity, not us.



Help with the cost of living

We are administering the **Household Support Fund** for Solihull residents of **State Pension Age** who are on **low incomes** and struggling **with the cost of living**. The types of support available may include:

- Access to **food**
- Items to help you **keep warm** e.g. electric blankets, duvets
- Essential **household items** e.g. cooker, fridge, bed
- **Energy Debt**
- **Energy/Fuel Top-Up Vouchers**
- **Other essential support** that falls within the scheme criteria



To apply to the Age UK Solihull Household Support Fund Scheme please telephone **0121 704 7844** (answer machine) or email partners@ageuksolihull.org.uk. Eligibility criteria apply. Visit www.ageuk.org.uk/solihull/cost-of-living-support for more details and other support available.

Thought of your own fundraising idea? Email events@ageuksolihull.org.uk to discuss.

£6k and plenty of smiles raised at Christmas

We may be heading into summer now, but we must thank everyone who helped to make **Christmas 2022** so joyful for our clients, and helped to **raise funds** to support our work.



McCarthy Stone generously offered their Wheatley Place retirement development as a venue for our clients' Christmas lunches. **Bluebird Care Solihull** sponsored drinks at the parties and **CareHandle** made a contribution towards the entertainment.

Over **500 gifts** for our clients were collected or donated by local organisations including **Birmingham Business Park, Home Instead Solihull, National Grid, Wadsworths Solicitors, Open Study College, Alderbrook School, Barchester Healthcare** and **Solihull St Alphege Rotary Club**.



We visited **Christmas Fayres** at Birmingham **Business Park, Claridge Place Care Home (left)** and **Blossomfield Rose Care Home**, selling Christmas cards, gifts and other items.

We held two **carol singing events** at **Solihull Retail Park** with local choirs, **Sing Solihull** and

Care homes that care



The team at **Care UK's Blossomfield Grange Care Home**, off Dog Kennel Lane, is aiming to raise over **£1,000** for us in 2023.

They are on track to hit the target, as they have already raised a total of **£351** through a **chocolate raffle**, donations from a resident's **100th birthday**, and a **Quiz Night** (*pictured are the winners, the "Scrambled Eggheads"*).

After the success of their first Quiz Night, Blossomfield Grange plans to host more events to raise funds for us this year.

We are delighted to be partnered with Blossomfield Grange for 2023 and we **can't wait** for the next event.

Thank you to **Claridge Place Care Home** who allowed us to hold our Wednesday Afternoon Club there when we couldn't use our usual venue

Everybody Sings. Singers and volunteers collected donations totaling **£288**.

We also joined **Shirley Lions' Father Christmas** and his sleigh around the streets of Shirley, collecting donations on two evenings in December. **£500** was raised for Age UK Solihull from the two evenings.



The **Rotary Club of Knowle & Dorridge** generously purchased **£1,600** worth of heaters and electric blankets for our **Winter Warmth Campaign** which supports Solihull households who are at risk during the winter months.



52 chocolate bouquets, created by **Starlight Hampers**, were raffled off by various companies, groups and individuals, raising **£1,200** profit, and our **Christmas Raffle** raised a record **£1,257**. General **donations** from generous **supporters** totaled over **£1,000** during the festive period.

We were **blown away** by what was achieved with the **support of the Solihull community** over the festive period. We are **so grateful** to everyone who helped raise this incredible amount.

Macc Care's Blossomfield Rose Nursing Home has also been raising funds for us.

First, the home hosted a hugely successful **Easter Family Fun Day** which was attended by over 200 guests. We received lots of positive feedback from guests, keen to know when the next event will be!

Then, the home's Operations Manger, Sonia **Tenniswood**, completed a **tandem skydive**, raising **£515**, which was matched by Macc Care.

The two activities raised **£2,000** in total, which Sonia presented to our Fundraising team, Becky and Lorraine (*pictured*).



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A record for our Benefits Service

We have helped **hundreds of Solihull residents** to be **over £3m better off** thanks to our **Benefits Service**.



Our **highly-trained staff and volunteers** help residents find out what benefits they are entitled to, and supports them with applications.

2022-23 was a **record year** for the service, as advisers helped residents of all ages successfully claim **£3,149,360** in benefits they were entitled to. Our **Volunteer-led Attendance Allowance claim service** supported older people to claim a huge **£500,000**. We are thrilled to have been able to help so many people **access financial support to make life a little easier**.

Solihull residents who are struggling with the cost of living can contact the **Community Advice Hubs** on **0121 709 7590** or visit www.solihullcommunityhub.org.uk

Nominate us to win £1,000!



With your help, we could win a **£1,000 donation** in Benefact Group's **Movement for Good Awards**.

270 charities will be awarded £1,000 in the next two draws in September and December. Thanks to everyone who nominated us, we were lucky enough to receive a £1,000 donation last year, which **meant so much to us**.

Please take a few moments to **nominate us** again by visiting www.movementforgood.com and entering the details below:

Charity name: **Age Concern Solihull** (this is our official registered charity name)

Charity number: **1055887**

Charity type: **Community**

Please share with friends and family to give us even more chance of winning! Thank you for your support.

Every gift in every Will, large or small, helps make a big difference. Visit www.ageuk.org.uk/solihull/leave-a-gift