



GET IN TOUCH with Rohini, Jenny or Crystal
9.00—5.00 Monday - Friday
Phone us 01858 439262
Email: champions@vasl.org.uk
Or call in to First Floor, Torch House,
Torch Way, Market Harborough LE16 9HL

Volunteer Newsletter August 2017

VASL piloted the Community Champions project for a year before applying for Big Lottery funding. We based the pilot on VASL's excellent Befriending Scheme and tried new things to alleviate loneliness. We want to **thank you** for your willingness to try new things, make suggestions, share your feedback and allow your stories to be published. The Consultant who wrote our bid application said it was easy to write, because the project was so good and full of life. Please keep feeding in your ideas.



**NATIONAL
LOTTERY FUNDED**

We have now appointed a third member to the team, Sam, and look forward to introducing her to you soon. Rohini and Jenny are changing their hours, so they will both work full days Rohini Tuesday to Friday, Jenny Monday to Wednesday.

We also have support from Crystal our Business Support Officer for about half a day a week.

News of our funding has been well publicised in local newspapers (The Harborough Mail, The Leicester Mercury), on local radio (HfM and BBC Radio Leicester) and on regional television (BBC East Midlands Today). You can access these on our website: www.vasl.org.uk/our-projects/community-champions. Please let us know what you think of the website—it is the project's shop window to the world.

We have received Congratulations from many people and partner organisations who are thrilled that we will be able to continue helping more people connect with others.

We want to thank VASL staff and Trustees for their support in making the project application a success. We have agreed annual and end of project targets with The Big Lottery so will still need regular feedback about your visits.



Digital Volunteers - Jenny met with Digital Volunteers as a peer learning group. People shared ideas of what support they had provided clients, and discussed challenges and potential solutions eg, maintaining boundaries, signposting. This group will set up a WhatsApp group so that they can continue information sharing



Jenny also met with Age UK 's Digital Project Manager to discuss how we can work in partnership. Age UK will be running a monthly group session at Harborough Library and if you would like to investigate the latest technology you could join them. We will pass on the details as soon as it is confirmed.



Community Champions is funded by the Big Lottery

VASL Registered Charity No. 1141274

Company Registration No. 7517828



July Gathering

We had another lively Community Gathering at Goodwins in Oadby. This was a new venue suggested by Lin, and feedback has been very positive. People liked having our own room and the fact there was no music so you could hear what people were saying. Thanks Lin! Please do let us know if you have suggestions for places we could go.

There were 19 of us at the Gathering - 7 volunteers, 9 clients, 2 staff and a visitor.

Conversations covered where people had been on holiday, recent volunteer visits, Tea at 3, day outings and the recent local publicity about VASL Community Champions securing The Big Lottery grant.

Rohini thanked everyone in the project for sharing their experiences. The new 5 year funding means that we will be able to help even more people re-connect with their local community and gain digital skills.



Rohini presented all our media stars with a small gift to acknowledge their support. The coverage has resulted in more new people wanting to get involved with the project, which is fantastic.

Jenny encouraged volunteers to change tables so that new connections can be made.

Our visitor has also decided to become a volunteer which is great. All in all another enjoyable Gathering with lively company.

The [VASL Volunteers Tea](#) on 28 June was a chance for VASL to thank their fantastic volunteers for another year of commitment. We know that Community Champions volunteers have helped clients acquire digital skills, build up their social confidence, get out to community events, join groups and make new friends.

Volunteers enjoyed a cream tea and were presented with a specially commissioned badge.



Training feedback

We held a two day **Mental**

Health First Aid course, which we found very useful in identifying the signs that people aren't coping. We hope to run a shorter four hour version later in the year. Three volunteers joined the VASL staff.



"with a concentrated listening ear, some early signs of mental malfunction may become apparent, which will have obvious benefits, now and in further experiences." Volunteer Feedback

Nine of us attended a **Hearing Loss and communication** Workshop if you couldn't attend www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk has a lot of very useful information.

Diary Dates

Community Gathering Tuesday 19th September at the Conservative Club, Fairfield Road MH. 1.30-3.30 to celebrate our five year funding. It will include 40 minutes of films from Harborough Movie

Makers and a time to share.

New Volunteer Training 13th September, if you know of anyone who might like to volunteer with us, please ask them to contact us before this date.

Wednesday 4th October **Community Gathering** 10.30-11.30, we'd love to go out of MH, do you have any ideas of an accessible venue?



What sort of relationship have you built?

"Warm, reciprocal and we laugh a lot"

"We have mutual respect built on similar humour and interests – the chemistry was right"

Steering Group

The Steering Group has volunteers, clients, staff and partners who meet to give us feedback and ideas.

New venues for gatherings were suggested; The Roebuck and Goodwins worked well but Welland Park Café has benches attached to tables so would not be suitable

Providing transport was identified as essential by the group, so we are now working with the Harborough Community Vehicle to ensure that we can offer lifts to venues.

We need to increase links with local groups so Rohini has met with MH U3A and other local groups.