



Summer News

The Link Visiting Scheme

Dear supporter and friend of The Link Visiting Scheme,

It's been another busy few months for us and we are pleased to update you on our latest news, services, and ambitions for the coming months. We enjoy hearing feedback from you about our work and how we might enjoy opportunities to work together to further support our community and those struggling with the serious impact of loneliness and isolation.

The Link receives two prestigious awards

We were so pleased to win one of the Berkshire High Sheriff awards for our work supporting the isolated. Mary Riall, Berkshire High Sheriff awarded people and organisations that have made an exceptional contribution to Berkshire communities over the last year. We were delighted to hear the news during a virtual ceremony and celebration in March. This was a wonderful morale boost for our volunteers who have worked so hard to support those in lockdown who felt most vulnerable.

In June we were thrilled to win The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. This is the highest award a voluntary group can receive in the UK. We will receive the award crystal and certificate from James Puxley the Lord Lieutenant of Berkshire later this year. We are so honoured and pleased that all our volunteers are recognised this way. Our volunteers went above and beyond during the first lockdown too and so along with this award comes special recognition for our part in supporting the community during such a challenging time.



The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service



Local resident is a fundraising hero

On Saturday 29th May, Jim Edwards strode out in aid of Link Visiting and walked 100km (63 miles) in just over 25 hours, only stopping for food and drink! Jim raised an incredible £1,547 and at 67 years young, this was quite an achievement and one we followed throughout the day and night. The walk organised by Action Challenge began in Richmond Park, London and 729 competitors ended their walk at Brighton racecourse. Jim came 411th and we think he is a true Link fundraising hero!

If you would like to match fund his fundraising efforts and, in the process, encourage others to participate in fundraising efforts such as this, we would be so grateful! For more info on Jim's walking campaign, you can view his localgiving page at: localgiving.org/fundraising/JimLondon2Brighton/



The way to have friends is to be one

"It has been very rewarding getting to know my 87 year old Link Friend, Jean. She has felt so lonely at times and for the first 8 months of the lockdown, I was her only visitor. I know she gets a lot out of our friendship, as do I. I helped her purchase a tablet computer 18 months ago and have enjoyed teaching her how to use it. She took to it like a duck to water! It has been life-changing for her. We have always enjoyed going out together, visiting garden centres, nature reserves or if the weather is good, just going for tea and cake. I really enjoy our friendship and our time together every week." - Carol, Link Volunteer

Welcome to John Mallaghan our new Chair of Trustees!

John Mallaghan has been appointed our new Chair of Trustees. John has been volunteering for Link Visiting since 2014, starting as a volunteer befriender but quickly becoming involved in all aspects of the charity. John has been instrumental in helping us win large funding awards including our contract with Wokingham Borough Council and with the National Lottery. John has served as a Link Trustee since 2017, and we believe he is perfectly placed to lead us to the next new and exciting chapter in our story.

"I have loved helping Link Visiting over the years, and I look forward to helping even more as Chair of Trustees. I still plan to assist where I can at events and continue visiting my two Link Friends, to experience first-hand the great work and outcomes delivered every day by the charity. I have often said this is the best small charity in the country. Watching how the team responded to the pandemic, now acknowledged by winning awards has only reinforced that. We aim to maintain those high standards and bring as many smiles to our Link Friends as we can." - John Mallaghan, Chair of Trustees.

Linking to nature is good for you

The benefits of spending time in green space or bringing nature into your everyday life can benefit both your mental and physical wellbeing. Doing things like growing food or flowers or exercising and spending time outdoors can have many positive effects such as improving mood, reducing feelings of stress and help you to feel more relaxed and be more active. With this in mind, we have enjoyed witnessing first-hand the benefits of our Link to Nature project. This project sees volunteers and their Link Friends growing flowers and vegetables together, feeding birds and watching out for bees and butterflies. It's providing a focus for their friendship where conversations may be tricky, for example with those at the beginning stages of dementia.

We are thankful for financial support from local business, **The Property Assistant** and gardening expertise provided by our delivery partners, **Wokingham in Bloom** and **Wokingham Horticultural Society (WHA)**. Because of our partnership with them, we are aiming to recycle 5,000 pots and deliver 3,500 plants and seeds to our community in the next 3 years!



Our focus this summer is helping older people reconnect

As restrictions ease, we are aware how important it is to meet up with our older Link Friends and provide opportunities to socialise once again. Our focus for the summer is on reconnection. Small group Reconnection Sessions are aimed at our Link Friends who need extra company but may struggle with confidence and mobility after so long in lockdown. These sessions will inform attendees of regular activities and events within their local area, and we will then help each person, via a personalised plan, access the groups they are interested in as and when restrictions allow. We hope that these sessions will be helpful, informative, good fun and importantly a place where everyone receives a very warm welcome after so long at home.

Our aim is to begin a gradual programme of regular activities and events in the autumn where our members feel included, encouraged, and enabled to have as many social opportunities as they would like. If you'd like to help us with this programme, please see how you can do so at the end of this newsletter.



Why local business, the Property Assistant, is proud to support us

We have been incredibly lucky in our lives in Wokingham to have so many wonderful friends. We love nothing more than meeting up at one of Wokingham's pubs or restaurants with the people who mean the most to us. We as a family chose to support Link Visiting because we cannot bear the thought that there are people within our area that do not have the opportunity to meet up with people they love. We were also desperately troubled that there were far more people in that situation than even we expected!

We chose to sponsor the Link because we want to give something back, but also support those who are not able to call a friend or family member to ask for help.

We have really enjoyed the opportunity to take part in some of the amazing events that the Link arranges within the community and we also love it when we receive feedback as to what our donations have gone towards. For us personally, it is an incredibly rewarding experience, and we would love to do as much as we can.

- *The Property Assistant team* | www.pauk.property

Ways to support us

Donations can be made by bank transfer to:

Link Visiting Scheme | **Co-op Bank** | **Account Number: 65562677** | **Sort Code 08-92-99**

Consider supporting us regularly via Local Giving: localgiving.org/charity/linkvisiting/

Kind regards,

Marjie Walker

CEO, The Link Visiting Scheme

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Stay connected!

We'd love to connect with you on social media. Be sure to follow our pages for regular updates on what we're getting up to.



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The Link Visiting Scheme