

Annual Highlights

2023-2024

Chairs Foreward



Throughout my second term as Chairman of this remarkable organisation, I am immensely proud of my colleagues who have helped steer us through the challenges of 2023-24. The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, combined with ongoing economic and health crises, created unprecedented hardships. Yet, with resilience and unwavering dedication, we have continued to stand firm, ensuring that our charity remains true to its mission of serving our communities.

Our achievements this year are a testament to the collective strength of our Trustees, the hard-working CAVS Team, and our passionate volunteers, whose commitment is reflected in the content of this paper. Together, we have navigated our way throughout the year with commitment and collaborative partnership working that has underpinned what we deliver.

Through our Family Mentoring Service we extended support to many families with children and young people facing life challenges. The Ways to Wellness Team and Social Prescribers assisted countless residents facing health and wellbeing issues. Our Befriending Service helped combat loneliness and isolation with literally hundreds of welfare calls being made to residents reaching out to us for comforting connection.

CAVS has been on the frontline, rising to significant challenges in order to meet the increase in demand on our services. Our wonderful Volunteers continued to positively impact our operations, going above and beyond the call of duty to uplift those in very real need. Our commitment to recruiting new volunteers remained a high priority, as we strategically invested in community engagement to encourage more voluntary participation.

It is deeply rewarding to see, that in aligning our efforts with our ambitious goals, just what has been accomplished. None of this would have been possible without the skills and vision of our Board, the CAVS Team, and our inspiring volunteers. The ability to adapt in response to an ever-changing environment has been the driving force in all that we do.

Huge thanks to everyone.

Dan Garside
Chairman, CAVS

CEO Overview

As we approached a new financial year, I knew it would not be without its challenges. The past twelve months tested our resolve and resilience, but equally, it has been more rewarding than I could have imagined. Leading an organisation of talented, dedicated and caring staff and volunteers, all going the extra mile to help those less fortunate in our communities is a genuine privilege.

The ongoing cost of living crisis, rising prices, and high inflation rates had a profound impact on all of us. Statutory organisations faced budget pressures and the needs of the communities we serve became more demanding. These demands came at a time when funding is tight and expectations higher than ever.

Despite these significant challenges, I am incredibly proud of what we have achieved through this difficult period of time. In the face of mounting demand for our services and a tough economic environment, my priority has been to focus on exploiting opportunities and expanding our services, whilst ensuring we have the right resources and skills to deliver our strategy.

I have been consistently impressed with the dedication and passion of my team and dedicated volunteers. Together, they have worked seamlessly across our entire operation, providing lifelines of support to almost 3,000 service users, helping them to lead healthier, happier lives. Reflecting on the past two years, I am truly proud of the success of our Canvey Island Office, which has expanded to offer local access to residents in need of social prescribing services. Our collaboration with the Primary Care Network, GP practices, and other partners has been crucial to its success.

We also made great strides externally, with our Community Breakfast initiatives that offer valuable networking and information-sharing opportunities for CAVS Members. In May, as part of the King's Coronation celebrations, we honoured our incredible volunteers with celebratory cards and held a festive event in December, which was hosted at Castle Point Borough Council in the lovely setting of the Atrium. These very special occasions represent not only moments of recognition, but reinforce the impact that we make through meaningful, shared experiences.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all of our supporters who have fundraised with such commitment. Your belief in our cause has been instrumental in sustaining our vital work.

Finally, I wish to thank our Board of Trustees, my team, our volunteers, members, partners, and public donors for their tremendous contributions. Without your unwavering support, we could not continue to deliver the vital services that make a real difference to the lives of so many.

Janis Gibson
CEO, CAVS

Volunteering Matters

We are continually inspired by our incredible army of dedicated Volunteers whose unwavering commitment drives the very heart of our charitable work. The generosity and kindness with the time they devote, helps us deliver the essential services that we do across our local communities. Without them, we would not be able to make the impact that we do.

In May, as part of the King's Coronation, The Big Help Out initiative was launched to encourage everyone to step up and make a difference in their communities. We honoured our own volunteers, sending special Coronation Cards, to express our heartfelt thanks for all their incredible contributions.

Volunteers' Week in particular, throughout early June, was a perfect time to shine a spotlight on the amazing work our volunteers do every single day. Countless residents are assisted in a multitude of ways, helping them to lead healthier and happier lives.

In December, we celebrated in true festive spirit by hosting a special Christmas gathering in the lovely Atrium at Castle Point Borough Council. Over one-hundred volunteers, alongside local dignitaries came together to enjoy the festivities, entertainment, and celebrate their wonderful achievements.

Recruiting volunteers continues to be a priority and our targeted marketing and outreach efforts were rewarded, as we enrolled a significant number of new individuals into our volunteer family. Community engagement at external events also played a key role, allowing us to raise awareness, connect with residents, and showcase the flexible, rewarding opportunities open to them.



In Festive Spirit at our Volunteer Christmas Party

Heartfelt Thanks To All Our Wonderful Volunteers For
All That You Do To Support Our Charitable Mission



Community Breakfasts

Our highly popular Community Breakfasts, held in March and October 2023 at Runnymede Hall in Benfleet, were a tremendous success. The accessible venue provided the perfect setting for these gatherings, which brought together CAVS members, local organisations, voluntary and community groups for valuable networking in a relaxed environment. With over 100 attendees at each activity, including local dignitaries, these events created a dynamic opportunity for connection and collaboration.

The breakfasts also featured inspiring Guest Speakers who shared powerful insights from their respective fields. Mark Neville, Dementia Friendly Communities Coordinator for the Alzheimer's Society (Essex), delivered an impassioned talk about the critical work being done to improve the lives of those affected by dementia. Shelley Taylor, Chair of REMAP, moved the audience with her presentation on how their charity is transforming the lives of disabled people by designing and adapting bespoke equipment to foster independence.

John Gilham, CEO of Gambling Harm UK, left a profound impact with his compelling address on the urgent public health issue of gambling harm and the charity's dedication to its prevention and reduction.

These events were not only a celebration of community, but also a powerful platform for addressing some of the most pressing issues being faced across our local districts.



L-R: Wayne Johnson, CAVS Trustee, Debbie Skeels, SSAFA, Cllr. Colin Riley, Shelley Taylor, Chair REMAP, Ray Howard MBE, Janis Gibson, CEO CAVS, Mark Neville, Dementia Friendly Communities Coordinator.



L-R: CAVS Sophie, Nicky, Volunteer Diane welcome guests on the day



Guests absorbed in listening to interesting Guest Speaker Presentation

Fundraising Matters



Brilliant! Thank you To The Coop



Huge Thanks To Waitrose

Community Matters

Charity Of The Year Partnership

We were delighted to have been chosen as Bluebird Care's (Castle Point) Charity of the Year.

This rewarding partnership has not only raised amazing funds for our cause but also amplified awareness of the impactful work we do. Huge thanks to them for their tremendous support and dedication. We are truly grateful.



Bluebird Care put there best feet forward and raised great funds !

Fundraising means more than financial support to our operation. It empowers us to share our mission with the broader community, raising awareness about the transformative impact that our work has on local residents who turn to us for help.

A huge **THANK YOU** goes out to our incredible supporters: Waitrose, for their generous donations; Bluebird Care, whose innovative Christmas walk brought in excellent funds; and the Co-op Community Fund, which inspired local residents to rally behind our cause with every shop.

Every penny raised makes a tangible difference, enabling us to continue delivering the vital services that we do, throughout the communities we care for.

CAVS Social Groups

Our community groups, led by dedicated volunteers, attracted strong participation. Popular programmes such as Walk, Talk and Be Healthy, Inspire Women's Network, Computer Technology, My Weight Matters, Bereavement Support, Craft and Ageless Inspiration groups provided local residents with fantastic opportunities to connect, learn new skills, and form new friendships.

These enriching social activities have fostered a stronger sense of community and belonging and are enjoyed in both Benfleet and Canvey Island.

Dementia Friendly

In the summer of 2023, we were officially recognised as a Dementia Friendly organisation and were very proud to achieve this recognition and accreditation. Our commitment in helping to create an inclusive and supportive environment for residents affected by living with dementia is paramount.

The Basildon Dementia Action Alliance praised the pro-active collaboration, especially as this accomplishment was the first-ever to be awarded by the Alliance outside of the Basildon Borough.



Centre: Janis Gibson, CAVS Chief Executive Officer, surrounded by some of CAVS Team. Centre Left: Colleen Mortensen, Co-Chair, Basildon Dementia Action Alliance

United In Kindness



Christmas Tree Of Kindness



If You Can Be Anything, Be Kind

In partnership with United in Kind, we proudly supported the Christmas Tree of Kindness initiative, helping to spread Christmas joy and making festive wishes come true for countless Castle Point residents.

The lovely Christmas trees, adorned with glowing stars and heartfelt wishes at Morrisons Hadleigh and Canvey Island, portrayed symbols of community spirit.

Thanks to the generosity of local residents, over one-hundred CAVS service users received special gifts, turning their dreams into reality. These amazing acts of kindness truly captured the magic of the season.

✓ CAVS Ways to Wellness - Social Prescribing

Over eight years, CAVS Ways to Wellness Social Prescribing has been the crucial first point of contact for countless clients, offering immediate support and guidance. The team's expertise and dedication make them a trusted source for residents seeking help, and who navigate the range of local services and support groups that are available across our local communities. With a thorough understanding of non-clinical issues that impact health and wellbeing, our busy team support clients in so many ways.



L-R: Volunteers Janice and Diane, CAVS Kim and Kellie, Ways to Wellness

We played a pivotal role in the Community Hub Project. For many, additional non-clinical assistance has been essential to their recovery and overall wellbeing. The primary areas where our services have made a very big impact include helping to alleviate isolation, guidance on financial issues and signposting to home-help services.

Since the services inception in 2016, we have proudly responded to over nine-thousand inquiries from residents and partner agencies, which demonstrates the commitment we have to helping residents in very real need of assistance.

"Client stated she had felt so very low and just didn't know how to get out of the blip as she had never had someone that listened to her the way we did. She was extremely grateful and no longer requires our service."

"I cannot thank you enough for your calls and support, I really felt listened too!"

✓ CAVS Wellbeing Link Coordinators - Social Prescribing Services

Since its launch in 2020, CAVS Social Prescribing Services has experienced remarkable growth, managing over seven thousand referrals across Benfleet, Rochford, Rayleigh, and Canvey Island.

Its success has stemmed from intrinsic partnerships with Primary Care Networks (PCNs) and their multi-disciplinary teams, that has enabled us to address a wide range of non-clinical needs for local residents. The Social Prescribing team plays a crucial role in guiding and empowering them to take charge of their own care whilst alleviating pressure on GP services.

Social Prescribing continues to provide a lifeline for many residents, some of whom are still coping with the longer-term impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, where our team continuously evolve to meet the ever-changing needs required of them.

"I am writing to pass on gratitude from SH and family about the care received by your Social Prescriber recently. They were very impressed with her knowledge and kindness. She made them feel at ease during this difficult time, going above and beyond to make sure they had everything they are entitled to and all types of support."

"Client contacted CAVS to say this service had been invaluable in obtaining a falls pendant and also assisting her in receiving a B12 injection which had been pending for 2 years! She could not thank the team enough".

✓ CAVS Befriending and Telephone Befriending Service



Now in its twelfth year, our Befriending Service continues to serve as a vital lifeline for local residents in need of support and companionship. In the past year alone, we conducted over one thousand, eight-hundred welfare calls, offering both emotional comfort and practical assistance to individuals, whilst actively helping to combat the widespread issues of loneliness and isolation.

L-R: Laura and Sophie
CAVS Befriending Service

Our Volunteer Telephone Befriending and One-to-One services saw a sharp rise in demand, underscoring the increasing need for meaningful connection. Responding to this, in the summer of 2023, we launched a Pen Pal Scheme, which was enthusiastically accepted by both new and existing clients. Through this initiative, we matched a large number of residents with volunteer Pen Pals, ensuring each individual felt valued and connected in a more personal, thoughtful way.

This engagement reflects an ongoing commitment to fostering inclusion and strengthening the bonds we tie for those in need across our local communities.

"Pen Pals is a wonderful idea, especially for us older generation who like this way of communicating. It is lovely to receive a personal letter and to find out we have so much in common has been even better. We have decided between us to write every 4 weeks to update each other on our news and I am really looking forward to receiving her next letter."

"I found the process of letter writing very interesting as I haven't written a letter for around 30 years but I was able to put a few lines together. I am very grateful for everything CAVS do for me and for keeping in regular contact."

✓ ECL South East

ECL's Reablement service is essential in empowering countless individuals to live safely, to maintain their dignity and importantly, independently in their own homes and communities. In working with the ECL teams, the dedication to Service Users is positively strengthened, with the addition of an Information & Advice Coordinator for the South West Region, further heightening our collaborative efforts.

Over one-thousand, two-hundred individuals benefitted from the care and expertise of our team; adults with learning disabilities, the elderly, those receiving Reablement services, and people with sensory impairments, all receiving tailored and personalised care to meet both low and high levels of need.



L-R: Sam and newly recruited Gabriella, ECL
Information and Advice Coordinators, South East



CAVS Family Mentoring Service

Supported by the Community Lottery, the growing demand for Family Mentoring and support services grew, as many children, young people and their parents struggle for all sorts of reasons. This led to a greater need for guidance and support in areas such as mental health, parenting, education, and family dynamics. As more families sought assistance, our Family Mentoring service became busier and even more crucial.

Our skilled team of Family Support Practitioners and Volunteer Mentors rose to the challenges, providing effective strategies to help families manage their challenges. Key programmes - FLASH (Families Learning about Self-Harm), STOP (Supportive Programme for Parents of Teenagers), and Exam Anxiety—were successfully delivered by our trained staff, that made a meaningful and positive impact on many families.

We maintained strong partnerships with schools, and helped to provide through the Locality Panel Fund, school uniform vouchers which were distributed to families in need. During the winter, we collaborated with United in Kind and Morrisons, on the Christmas Tree of Kindness initiative, bringing festive joy to families by fulfilling Christmas wishes. Our Family Support Practitioners delivered gifts to families less fortunate and food hampers generously donated by VOS (Vineyard of Succour) Parish for Adults with Disabilities were distributed in cooperation with local primary schools.

"We took great pride in playing a vital role in helping families build resilience, strengthen relationships, and adapt to the ongoing challenges of the post-pandemic world."

"Thank you again, so much! You are all AMAZING, SENSITIVE, KIND, FUN, CARING AND JUST WORTH YOUR WEIGHT IN GOLD".

"I don't know how to thank you all! This course has changed my mindset and approach at home, in work and with friends and family".

"You ladies are absolutely wonderful and helped so much. In just these few short weeks my relationship with my daughter has changed and grown tremendously. In what has been a chaotic time, the learning has been one of the best couple of months for me to be honest".



CAVS Membership

Over four-hundred charitable and community organisations form part of CAVS vibrant Membership and we always welcome new members to be part of our skilled and talented network. It is FREE to join.

Our members appreciate bi-monthly news bulletins and information updates, ensuring relevant communications are shared on the many activities and events happening across our communities, including grant funding opportunities, training and other interesting topics.

"Thank you for the news bulletins. We find them so interesting and appreciate the update on community news".

"Keep up the great work, we find the news interesting and it's valuable to share with our networks".