



Better Together
Cavs

ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

2024-2025



Chairs Foreward

Throughout my third term as Chairman of this remarkable organisation, I am immensely proud of my colleagues who have helped steer us through another year of challenges in 2024-25. We have seen rising demand for services and often being asked to support more complex residents. This is all alongside rising costs, but a decline in sources of income, with government funding being cut.

Yet, with resilience and unwavering dedication, we have continued to deliver, ensuring that our charity remains both financially robust and true to its mission of serving our communities. I wish to pay tribute to Janis Gibson, CAVS amazing CEO who guided the charity for eleven years and who retired in March 2025. I know I can speak on behalf of all the Trustees, Staff and Volunteers when I thank her for her years of dedication to CAVS and we were all very pleased to wish her a long and happy retirement.

Our core services remained strong and busy. CAVS Family Mentoring Service 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, making hundreds of welfare calls to residents reaching out to us for comforting connection. Our Hospital Discharge Service has supported people on their return home from hospital lowering the readmission rate alongside increasing people's knowledge of community support open to them.

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.

As we enter into 2026, Essex faces a structural transformation driven by Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution and Local Government Reform alongside the implementation of the NHS 10-Year Plan, significant changes to Integrated Care Boards (ICBs), and the rollout of the Civil Society Covenant. These developments create both pressures and opportunities for communities. Rising demand, increasing costs, and evolving public systems place new strains on services, but they also offer a chance to reimagine how support is designed and delivered.

With our strategic and ambitious goals, I am confident that we will adapt and rise to the changes and challenges of the environment that is ultimately shaped and in which we work. The exceptional abilities and vision of our Board, the dedicated CAVS Team members and wonderful Volunteers will help positively drive things forward into the New Year ahead.

Huge thanks to everyone.

Dan Garside
Chair



As I step into my new role as CEO, I am proud to reflect on the remarkable legacy left by Janis Gibson, who retired on 31 March 2025 after eleven dedicated years leading CAVS. Her commitment, resilience, and passion have shaped the organisation we are today, and we owe her our deepest thanks for an extraordinary final year at the helm.

The past year brought its fair share of challenges. The cost-of-living crisis and rising prices, still detrimentally affected many people, causing additional hardship for the residents we serve. Statutory organisations experienced significant budget cuts at the same time as demand for services increased. This created funding insecurity for the charity sector, also facing rising demand, whilst we navigated assisting residents with increasingly complex needs. At the same time, competition has grown from other providers seeking to enter the infrastructure support space in Essex, resulting in a loss of income for CVS's. Despite the pressures, we stepped up and met the challenges head-on.

Thanks to Better Care Fund Investment we were able to recruit a new CAVS team member to take on the role of Community Support Advisor, positioned at Southend Hospital. This service supported the provision of personalised, non-clinical support for Castle Point residents as they are discharged from hospital and return home. Additionally, RRAVS were also appointed to carry this out for the Rochford community.

The impact has been exceptional. Commissioners have highlighted their enthusiasm for the strong outcomes achieved and the substantial number of people supported. Hospital staff have also expressed sincere appreciation for the positive difference the service is making, particularly during periods of intense pressure on discharge teams.

We were delighted to collaborate with Dave Blackwell, Leader of Castle Point Borough Council, in producing a Community Services video at Knightswick Shopping Centre, Canvey Island. The video showcased the wide range of support available to local residents and featured several CAVS member organisations, highlighting their outstanding work, whilst also demonstrating the strength, unity and passion that defines Castle Point.

The year was also an eventful one. We actively participated in several external Community events to help raise profile and promote services. Talks to clubs and groups was active and through our engagement we are pleased to have successfully recruited a steady stream of new and enthusiastic volunteers.

A standout success was the winter slipper swap initiative, which made a real difference in keeping our community safe. In providing one-hundred and seventy pairs of supportive slippers to residents, we helped to reduce slips, trips, and falls across the Borough.

My heartfelt gratitude is extended to the entire CAVS Team; our dedicated Staff, Trustees, and Volunteers. Your passion, dedication, and warmth have made me feel truly welcome. Together, we are making a real difference in the lives of residents across our community, and I look forward to continuing this vital work with you all.

Tracy Harris

Chief Executive Officer

We Bid A Fond Farewell To Longstanding CEO, Janis Gibson

After 11 years of dedicated service, CAVS CEO Janis Gibson retired in March 2025.

Throughout her tenure, Janis led with exceptional passion, drive, and an unwavering commitment to supporting CAVS charitable mission.



Her outstanding leadership was marked by resilience and determination, guiding the charity through challenges and opportunities, while continually championing the needs of the communities it serves.

The CAVS team, Trustees and Volunteers paid tribute to her wonderful hard work and bid a heartfelt farewell, wishing her every happiness in the next chapter of her life journey.

We Welcomed Onboard A New Chief Executive

Welcome

Tracy Harris was appointed CAVS new Chief Executive in the latter part of March 2025 and was warmly welcomed into the organisation.

A highly respected and experienced Executive, with a career spanning many years in charitable organisations, Housing and Head of Communities and Integration at Southend City Council, Tracy's wealth of knowledge, ability and skills will help lead and further enhance support and services for our population.

CAVS Were Nominated Charity of the Year 2025

We were delighted and honoured to have been chosen by Lady Captain Gill Boyce of Boyce Hill Golf Club as her charity of the year.

The exciting partnership was officially launched in mid-January, 2025 with a special 'Pink' themed luncheon hosted by Lady Captain Boyce.

Guests were entertained by the Lady Captain's fun 'Drive-In' to celebrate this special event and the 'Pink' theme, (Promoting, Inclusivity, Nurturing and Kindness), which she introduced for her year in term.



The event brought together Club members, dressed in pink, and representatives from CAVS for a gathering designed to celebrate not only the Lady Captain's forthcoming year in post but also to raise awareness of the charity's mission and its impactful work within the community.



Throughout the course of the year, numerous fund-raising activities were planned. One amazing event that took place, involved four passionate Lady Members taking on a test of extraordinary endurance and determination, a 54-holes of golf challenge in a single day!

Teeing off at sunrise and powering through three full rounds of the course, the ladies were fuelled not just by their love of golf, but by a shared commitment to making a real difference to the lives of people across our local communities who need it most, raising some incredible funds for us in the process.



An Eventful Year - Showcasing Our Charitable Work



In the latter part of March 2024, we hosted our first-ever Community Services and Information Event at the Knightswick Shopping Centre, Canvey Island. It was a huge success and very well supported by CAVS Membership Organisations. Local dignitaries attended on the day and the event provided a wonderful opportunity for local residents to easily access information on the myriad of fantastic services available to them. Photos above, illustrate some great engagement on the day.



Throughout the calendar year we actively participated in numerous Community Events to help raise CAVS profile and promote the work that we do. Volunteering and the recruitment of new volunteers played a key focus. These various events enabled us to engage with many local residents and capture interest.

Talks to community groups also played a vital part of our work. Notably, USP College in Benfleet invited us to take part in Charity Week 2024 and talk to young students about volunteering, what it means to volunteer, the benefits of volunteering and to help inspire them to become more active and socially engaged this way.

We Celebrated CAVS Wonderful Volunteers



Where would we be without our sterling volunteers? All year round, day-in and day-out, our army of very talented and dedicated individuals, devoted so much of their spare time to wholeheartedly support our charitable mission, demonstrating their kindness and goodwill in helping many local residents in all sorts of ways, who turned to us for lifelines of support.

Their sterling efforts were rewarded in early October 2024, as we hosted a special celebratory afternoon tea which took place at Smallgains Hall, Canvey Island. It was a time to recognise and thank everyone for all that they do and the amazing contributions that they make. Janis Gibson, CEO CAVS, and Wayne Johnson, CAVS Trustee (photo second from left) praised the tremendous work taking place across our local communities.

**It's time to
celebrate!**

#VolunteersWeek

**Thank You,
Volunteers**

#volunteersweek

VOLUNTEERS'
WEEK

The annual and National Volunteers' Week that takes place every June, also afforded a great platform for us to highlight just how much our sterling Volunteers' are truly valued.

Every single one underpins our vital work; without them, we would not be able to serve the many, many local residents that we do.

Recruiting new volunteers remained a key priority as we worked to expand our busy base. By attending community events, embracing word-of-mouth referrals, and strengthening our presence on social media, we've continued to welcome a steady stream of enthusiastic people.

Our capacity to support local communities and maintain our vital services depends on the generosity of volunteers who step forward to help those who need it most. As demand increases, each new volunteer strengthens our resilience and enhances our impact, enabling us to respond more effectively to changing needs.

Significant Achievements Year Round

Community Video



Leader of the Council, Dave Blackwell

We were delighted to collaborate with the Leader of Castle Point Borough Council, Dave Blackwell, to help produce a Community Video which he commissioned to help local residents better understand the wide range of community services available to them.

Working alongside several CAVS Member Organisations and a professional film company, the project showcased real people and services making a BIG difference to the lives of others every day.

The video was shared across social media and promoted through multiple communication channels to reach as many residents as possible, encouraging them to seek support with confidence.

Dementia Friendly

We were proud to receive Dementia Friendly re-accreditation and thrilled to be presented with our Certificate by Colleen Mortensen, Co-Chair of the Basildon Dementia Action Alliance, who praised the proactive collaboration.

The CAVS team are fully committed in helping to create an inclusive and supportive environment for residents who span Castle Point and other local areas, whose lives are affected by living with dementia.



CAVS Team Members with Tracy Harris, CEO CAVS and Colleen Mortensen (Centre)

Collaboration

The 17th Leigh-on-Sea Girl Guides (far right, with Guide Leader Dawn) chose CAVS to raise money for the charity by holding a Summer Silent Auction and Cake Sale. Their amazing efforts raised almost four-hundred pounds.

This was truly commendable from these young children who set out to accomplish the big return! Our heartfelt thanks to them and their collaboration.



Christmas Time Just Kept On Giving

Xmas Wishes



Christmas Wishes Adorn The Tree

We participated in the United in Kind Christmas Tree of Kindness and at this very special time of year we connected with the community to help make Christmas wishes come true for less fortunate residents so deserving of festive gifts.

Located in Morrisons Hadleigh and Morrisons Canvey Island, pretty festive stars lit up the stores. The extraordinary kindness of the community shone through for many local people, who received lovely gifts. Over one-hundred CAVS service users were recipients through this wonderful seasonal initiative led by Kinder Essex.

Xmas Gift Giving



We brought smiles to many children over Christmas time, as CAVS Family Mentoring Team spread good cheer delivering Giant Craft Boxes across Castle Point Schools and families, thanks to the generous donation we received of Hobbycraft Boxes.

This was all part of the The Art Council UK 'Let's Craft Initiative' to actively encourage people to be more creative.

The CAVS Family Mentoring team (photo above left) were especially busy delivering festive gifts to local residents, making their Christmas wishes come true, thanks to the 'United In Kind' Christmas Tree of Kindness project. The spirit of things brought joy and happiness to those less fortunate at this special time of year.

We were delighted to play a part in the Slipper Swap Scheme, helping residents across Castle Point Borough stay safer and warmer in winter. Nearly 200 pairs of brand-new, well-fitting slippers were distributed at community locations, with residents trading in their worn-out pairs for something more supportive. The aim was simple: to reduce avoidable trips, slips and falls by ensuring people have proper footwear at home. Alongside the slippers, cosy socks and warm gloves were also provided—small comforts that make a big difference during the colder months.

Xmas Slipper Swap



Core Services Are Active And Busy

CAVS Befriending Service

For over an amazing thirteen years, CAVS Befriending Service has provided a lifeline of support for many, many, residents across Castle Point, who experience loneliness and isolation.

Simply having someone to talk to can make a profound difference to a persons wellbeing and our wonderful CAVS team are making sure we serve those who need it most.



CAVS Team members Phoebe, Alan and Laura support Befriending and Volunteering

Over one-hundred CAVS volunteers provide regular telephone calls and personal home visits across our local communities, offering vital connection and reassurance in difficult times. Demand for this service continues to increase, as does the need for more volunteers to assist this vital work.

Additional needs are also identified by our trained team, who help refer residents for extra support, through CAVS Social Prescribing Services; with things such as food deliveries, homecare assistance and wellbeing advice.

This busy service received two-hundred and six new referrals throughout the financial period 2024/2025, highlighting just how much we are being turned to for help.

CAVS Ways to Wellness Service



Kellie and Kim help lead our Ways to Wellness Service



CAVS Ways to Wellness Social Prescribing continues to be a vital catalyst in supporting and signposting clients across Castle Point, Rayleigh, and Rochford to the services and community groups available to help them in their area. Our expert team draws on their extensive local knowledge to assist individuals with non-clinical issues that may be affecting their health and wellbeing.

We also continued to help operate the Community Hub project, providing practical support to patients recently discharged from hospital. This includes one-off food support, prescription collection, and help with a range of additional non-clinical needs.

Since the schemes inception in 2016, we are proud to have managed more than nineteen thousand enquiries, received either directly from clients or via our partner agencies.

Core Services - Are Active And Busy

New Recruitment Takes Place - A CAVS Community Support Advisor



Katie took on the new role for CAVS

Strengthening Discharge Support Through Personalised Wellbeing: Thanks to Better Care Fund investment, we were fortunate to be able to recruit a dedicated Community Support Advisor to support at Southend Hospital to provide personalised, non-clinical support for Castle Point residents as they prepared to return home. RRAVS were also awarded funding to mirror this service for their own Rochford residents.

Working alongside clinical teams and guided by “What Matters to Me” the Navigators have helped patients and families feel heard, supported, and confident about life after discharge.

During the early initial trial on Southbourne Ward, the team built strong partnerships with hospital staff and delivered almost three-hundred meaningful support interactions for seventy patients. The most common needs included food support, home-help, toenail cutting, transport, and fire safety checks.

This early success demonstrated the growing impact of a holistic, community-connected approach to prevention, wellbeing, and smoother transitions home.

ECL South East and South West

Our collaboration with ECL care, now into its eight year of operation and led by CAVS team members for the South East and West, Sam and Gabriella, delivers holistic, person-centered support that enhances the wellbeing of individuals across our local communities.

The combination of practical, on-the-ground care with expert guidance that is rooted in the Reablement ethos of promoting independence and empowering people to live fulfilling lives in their own homes is central to this vital community service.

This thriving partnership ensures that each individual’s unique needs are met with compassion, fostering confidence, dignity, and improved quality of life.

Together, we create a seamless support network that respects choice and encourages positive outcomes for all.



Sam



Gabriella



Core Services Are Active And Busy

CAVS Social Prescribing Service

The year brought both change and progress for CAVS Social Prescribing Services. The decision by the Benfleet practice to bring the service in-house in July 2024 altered the dynamic, though our work in Rayleigh, Rochford and Canvey Island continued to thrive.

Social prescribing has become an essential part of primary care, and Wellbeing Link Coordinators are central to this. By supporting clients to understand their health and wellbeing needs holistically, they are able to regain control, build confidence, and reduce the need for repeat GP appointments. Throughout 2024, the Rayleigh and Rochford teams increased their presence within GP surgeries to strengthen partnership working, while our Canvey team continued to operate effectively from our Third Avenue office.

The most common needs we addressed were mental health, financial pressures, and social isolation—issues that, without timely support, can severely impact quality of life. Our Coordinators offer the time, compassion and connection that many people struggle to find elsewhere, providing a crucial link between individuals and the community resources that can transform their wellbeing.

Despite the challenges, this year has reinforced how deeply valued social prescribing is. Our teams continue to play a vital role in supporting residents across the area, improving lives and easing pressure on our local health services. A total of two-thousand and ninety-two referrals were received, demonstrating the continued demand and trust placed in our service.

CAVS Family Mentoring Service



In our first year of National Lottery Reaching Communities funding, the CAVS Family Mentoring Service exceeded every target, supporting three-hundred and sixty-three individuals, as well as delivering two-thousand, one-hundred and eighteen mental health interventions. With one-hundred and fifty-four referrals from schools, health teams and community agencies, we are a trusted source of early help for families across Castle Point.

Specialist programmes that met the rising needs of local families, including two FLASH courses on self-harm awareness and two STOP programmes for parents of teenagers were delivered. Families engaged, built confidence and, in many cases, formed lasting peer support networks. Our team also strengthened school capacity through wellbeing sessions, SEN and attendance support, plus Zones of Regulation training.

Thanks to strong partnerships and targeted funding, including a substantial Essex Food Fund grant, we provided practical support to twenty families over Christmas and continued signposting many more to essential community resources. This active year has laid a powerful foundation, preventing escalation, improving wellbeing and ensuring families get the right support at the right time.

Words Of Praise And Thanks

We are very grateful for the kind words of appreciation and encouragement we receive from the many local residents that we serve. This constantly reminds us why our work matters.

Each message of support strengthens our resolve and reaffirms the impact we strive to make in the lives of those facing very real challenges.

CAVS Social Prescribing

"Thankyou for your kindness and compassion through this very difficult time".

"You have given me hope and helped lift a great weight off my mind".

CAVS Family Mentoring

"I feel like I have the ability to speak to Child X and the others in a way that is much more effective than previously. Thank you so much for your support"

"I think the service is brilliant and I'm grateful to have received the help. Child X and I gained so much from it. Having someone understand you when you are in a complicated situation with your own child is priceless. I'm very grateful for the great support".

CAVS Ways to Wellness

"Thankyou for calling. It has been lovely and you have made me feel so comfortable and reassured that what difficulty I am facing can be overcome.

"I feel so much better having spoken to you, it feels refreshing to be able to open up and speak to someone who truly understands and wants to help.

CAVS Befriending Service

"I don't know what I would do without my CAVS Befriender. She listens to me when I need to talk and always makes me feel happier. She is so thoughtful and I am really grateful for the friendship this bring to me. It's so lovely knowing someone cares.

"My weekly chat over the telephone means so much to me. I really look forward to it".

ECL South East

"I would like to convey my sincere appreciation for all the efforts you have made in supporting this individual's wellbeing and mental health. Your commitment is truly valued in bringing about such positive outcomes Thank you so much".

Membership

CAVS Membership of over four-hundred organisations is an amazing network of skilled professionals that we highly value and one that is strong and vibrant.

Our Membership offers a range of benefits. Not only is it FREE to join, but fortnightly bulletins and news updates are circulated to ensure everyone is kept up-to-date and informed of the fantastic opportunities that happen across our local communities, including grant funding, training, community events and many other interesting topics.

We always welcome new members to join us!



To join CAVS as a member please contact:

office@cavsorg.uk

or Tel: 01268 214 000

What Our Members Think

"Thanks for all your great work, I really look forward to reading the information sent".

"A huge thank you for these informative updates".

"Thanks for keeping us informed with all that's going on. It's really appreciated!"