



# Winter Newsletter

December 2023 [www.melkshamlink.com](http://www.melkshamlink.com) No.26



## Link looks back over a busy year at AGM

30 Link volunteers attended the Melksham & District Link AGM at The Riverside Centre on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> October.

Chairman, Liz Rowley, thanked all the volunteers who offer such a valuable service to the local community, praising the generosity of time and spirit from everyone who works hard to keep the service running.

A presentation of a gift and a card was given to Pat Cook to say thank you for all the work she has done to attract new volunteers in her role as Recruitment and Support Officer. She has recently stepped down from the role.

Treasurer, Richard Clark presented the audited accounts which showed our finances balanced over the year. Our service relies solely on client donations, we do not receive any funding or grants.

Demand for Link services has increased by over 30% this year and so far, we have largely managed to satisfy this demand. The greatest issue for Link is when clients request trips at short notice. Whilst we recognise that more and more hospitals seem to be arranging appointments at very short notice it makes it extremely hard for us to find a driver.

Currently we have a strong team of drivers, but we are always open to taking on new recruits. Our volunteers come from all walks of life and all ages so if anyone is interested, please do not hesitate to contact us for a chat.

Once the official business of the meeting was complete volunteers enjoyed nibbles and drinks to round off the evening. (Reprinted from Melksham News)



## Current Committee

December 2023

### Chair - Liz Rowley

07540 996148

[rowleyliz58@gmail.com](mailto:rowleyliz58@gmail.com)

Vice Chair - *Vacant*

### Secretary - Katherine Mills

07749 499491

[k\\_mills85@hotmail.com](mailto:k_mills85@hotmail.com)

### Treasurer - Richard Clark

01225 708110 07960 285279

[Richard.clark2@talktalk.net](mailto:Richard.clark2@talktalk.net)

### Driver's Rep - Martin Elson

07773 581950

[martinelson1@gmail.com](mailto:martinelson1@gmail.com)

### Co-ordinator's Rep - Alternates

### Officers

#### Webmaster - Ian Argyle

07920 194302

[ian.argyle68@gmail.com](mailto:ian.argyle68@gmail.com)

#### Assistant Treasurer - Phil Davis

07580 269264

[davis.phil@blinternet.com](mailto:davis.phil@blinternet.com)

#### Welfare & Safeguarding -

##### Ruth King

07377 189439

[ruth.king@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:ruth.king@blueyonder.co.uk)

#### DBS & GDPR Officer - Peter

##### Simmonds

01225 709156

[peter.simmonds@talktalk.net](mailto:peter.simmonds@talktalk.net)

Health & Safety Officer - *Vacant*

#### Recruitment Assistant -

*Vacant*

Publicity - *Vacant*

## Do you know anyone who might be interested in being a Coordinator?

Co-ordinators work in their own homes but are provided with the dedicated mobile phone and a laptop and lots of support. We try to keep the phone on from 9.00am- 4.00pm Monday to Friday to receive calls from clients about Medical appointments.

The role involves collecting the details about the appointment and then matching them to an available driver. It requires a nice friendly telephone manner, basic computer skills, empathy and the ability to be well organised.

We do require another Co-ordinator to join the team. We have currently 6 in the team who do approximately three days every 4 weeks.

## Help Needed!

We require volunteers to step forward and assist in the running of our Link Scheme. The Constitution requires 6 Committee members. The Committee meets 4 times a year for approximately 1 hour. We need a **Vice Chair** and a **Volunteer Recruitment & Support** person.

Officers do not necessarily have to attend meetings. Currently we have vacancies for people to look after **Publicity**, and **Health & Safety** and a **Recruitment Assistant**.

None of these roles are too onerous, and advice and support is always available. Anyone, regardless of how long you've been with Link, can take on these roles.

All you need is enthusiasm. Please contact Liz at **07540 996148** for a chat if you want to know more. We need to 'spread' the load a little and make any decisions in a democratic manner.

## New Drivers and the Members' area of the Website

We have recently attracted quite a few new drivers. It is worth reminding all drivers that many documents that you are likely to need are stored in the secure members area on the Melksham Link website - [www.melkshamlink.com](http://www.melkshamlink.com).

You will be able to print these off if needed or refer to them. Also there are past and current newsletters, Minutes of Committee meetings and Annual Report if you didn't get hold of a paper copy at the AGM. The claim form for Drivers is also there, if you have run out.

Webmaster Ian Argyle will give you access rights when you log in for the first time.

## Practical Matters

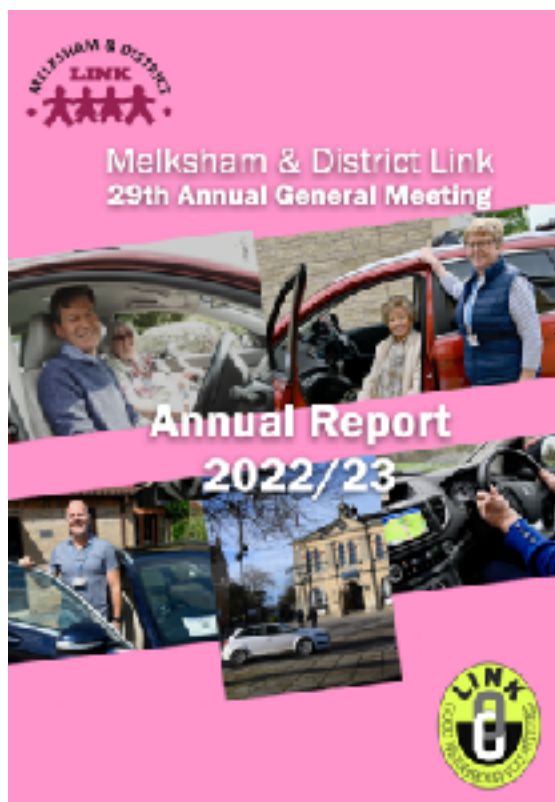
### Driver Availability

Your availability is the key to our success. Please ensure that you send in your availability for the following week to the Duty Coordinator by **4.00pm on the Monday of each week**. If you know you are unavailable beyond that, do let us know in advance and we'll input into the system. Let the coordinator know if you are happy to do more than 1 job a day. We are experiencing quite a bit of demand for requests at short notice. So just be aware.

### Health & Safety

Please do let the Duty Coordinator or Chairman know if you come across a client who is really too immobile for us to help. The mobility of a few of our clients has recently deteriorated to the stage where they really need a different form of assistance.

Drivers should not be lifting wheelchairs in or out of cars and they should not be expected to push wheelchairs. We are all compassionate people and want to help but we must be mindful of our own safety. (& liabilities)



## Sobering Data - We are serving a real need

This is a snippet of some of the information that was presented at a recent **Health & Well-Being in Melksham** meeting. One of their priorities is 'to support older and vulnerable people in Melksham.'

The following is taken from '*The Wiltshire Community Foundation Needs analysis*', published in March 2023 based on Melksham Town only.

- Melksham is the 4th largest town in Wiltshire with a population of 20,257 (2021)
- Melksham is the most deprived town in Wiltshire. The North-North East ward is the most deprived with over 33% of the working age population receiving DWP benefits.
- Melksham North has highest proportion of Attendance Allowance claimants in Wiltshire.
- Melksham North West has 5th lowest food security in Wiltshire.
- Melksham has the highest proportion of people receiving working age benefits in Wiltshire at 21.9%
- Melksham has third highest unemployment rate in Wiltshire and highest youth unemployment.
- Melksham has highest proportion of people with Disability benefits in Wiltshire and Swindon
- **But MELKSHAM has the 4th Best Community Needs Index rating** which suggests a very engaged and active community serving the real needs that the above data reveals. Melksham & District Link plays a huge part in achieving this Best Community Needs Index rating.

## Weekend Drives

Saturday and Sunday appointments do occur and we are extremely grateful to all drivers who offer availability at weekends.

As the Link phone is not in operation over the weekend Co-ordinators will in future ask drivers assigned a weekend drive if they will allow us to give their phone number to the client in the case of emergencies. Occasionally a client or the hospital cancels at the last minute and without the driver's phone number there is no other way of that information getting to the driver if there is a late change.

This system will only be used for 'out of hours' drives.

## Thank You

Finally amongst the many thank yous that we regularly receive from clients the Chairman has received thanks for the work we do from Wiltshire County Council Transport Officer, Jason Salter, and also from the Melksham & District Health and Well Being Committee for the huge part we play in making a difference to our community.

## AGM Minutes posted on Website

The AGM Minutes are now available in the secure Volunteer Area of our website. It was lovely to see so many volunteers at the recent AGM. It is always good to put faces to names as we don't often meet up. The actual business was concluded very quickly. Last Year's minutes were accepted and Liz Rowley was voted in as Chairman. Then plenty of food, drinks and chat followed.



*Melksham & District Link wish you all a very  
Happy Christmas and a wonderful New Year.*

*Thank you all for the time and effort you have given  
to Link this year. It has been greatly appreciated  
by all our clients.*

*Seasonal Best Wishes.*

*Liz Rowley*

