WHITMORE VALE
PROMOTING COMMUNITY LIVING

Newsletter

Winter Edition 2025/26



Welcome...

It may be wet and wintry outside but we've been busier than ever this festive season.

We visited Christmas fairs, had cosy evenings in with hot chocolates and fairy lights, not to mention the Christmas shopping! And what a wonderful time we had at the Christmas Disco, singing and dancing the night away.

Now we're so excited to see what 2026 has in store. Wishing you all a very Happy New Year!

Hello from Sonja

How far we've come.

In January I had the joy of going to the Turner Prize finalists' exhibition at Tate Bradford and it blew me away. To say I was emotional is an understatement. I have worked in support services for nearly 40 years and started my career resettling people into the community from large institutions and seeing Nnena win the Turner Prize and the beauty of her work... well I can't explain in words how it made me feel.

We have come so far as a country both living conditions and attitudes towards people with Leaning Disability and or Autism have changed so much. I have been very privileged to be part of that developing community alongside people with and without learning disabilities.

There is always more to do but let's just take a moment to think about the fact that 40 years ago 300,000 people with learning disabilities were living in long stay institutions and now someone with a learning disability and Autism has just won the Turner Prize and she won it on her talent and skills as an artist.

Sonja

Sonja Jones,
CEO WVHA

Photo courtesy of the artist, Nnena Kalu, and ActionSpace



Christmas snaps inside! Plus the best Xmas jumpers!



Decorations and disco dancing!



Got a story to share email EwanJ@whitmorevale.co.uk

Our Christmas Disco!



We'd been looking forward to the Christmas Disco for months, and oh what fun it was!

There was lots of excitement as we all arrived in our best outfits, and not even the dark, drizzly weather could put us off.

Then the party really started! The DJ played all the best Christmas songs, and we danced and twirled to the disco lights. Some of us even picked up the mic for a tune!

As we all know, strutting our stuff on the dance floor can be tiring, especially when we're wrapped in tinsel. So, when we needed a break there were plenty of drinks and mince pies to keep us merry. And as Robin showed us, there's always time for a Christmas selfie!

One of the biggest treats of the night was a special performance by our very own music group. Expressive Elements played their first big concert back at the summer party, and they were so good we had to hear them again. What a joyful show they put on!











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News from around our community

Turner Court

Positive ideas were the name of the game at Turner Court this winter, with cooking and community.

Inspired by our Healthy Eating project, Claudia and Chris cooked up a storm in the kitchen! Burgers were on Claudia's menu, complete with all the trimmings, while Chris served up some colourful chicken goujons.

We had so much fun cooking for each other and learning new recipes. And on top af all this, we think knowing all the ingredients that go into our dinners makes them even more tasty!

Then Jo and Lucy looked at home when they visited the very grand chambers at Waverley Borough Council. The intrepid pair joined in with a Tenants' Meeting, and talked about topics that are important to them. Well done Lucy and Jo!











Hindhead Supported Living



We had plenty of activities out this winter, and stayed cosy inside with a shared Christmas meal. We also welcomed Thomas to HSLS!



The WW2 exhibition in Portsmouth made for a powerful day out for Mr Shaw, Stuart and Lewis. Our thoughts went to all those involved in the Normandy landings.



And from serious memorials, to making new memories, Adrian joined the trio for a wonderful day at Winchester Christmas Market. Every tasty treat we could imagine was on show - we didn't know where to look first. We even managed a photo shoot with the Christmas Teddy! (Who reminds us very much of Mr Shaw...)



To top-off the festive fun, residents of the Ferns and The Old Manse got together for a delicious Christmas dinner. There was lots of talk about pudding and presents, of course. But no prizes for guessing what *the* hot topic of conversation was... Who had the best Christmas jumper!

We think they were all fantastic, but which is your favourite?







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Haven House



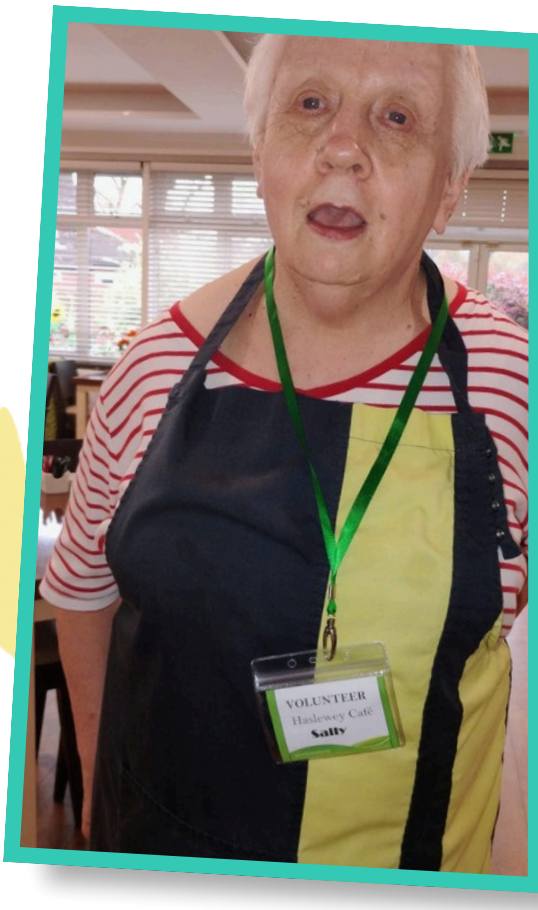


It was all hustle and bustle at Haven, with outings and even an awards ceremony.

We enjoyed an exciting trip to the bowling alley where Helen and Sue took on the ten-pins. They really showed off their skills and we can't wait to go back and try to beat our own records! Record breaking is tough work though, and afterwards we stopped off for a well deserved meal together, with cake.

And if you go down to the Hasleway Café this winter, you're in for a big surprise (and welcome) from our very own Sally! Yes, Sally has begun as a volunteer at the café, helping customers stay toasty on a cold day with all kinds of hot food and drinks. Congratulations Sally!

Last but not least came Haven's grand awards ceremony to round off the year. It was another special night as we celebrated all things Haven House.









Westlands



Westlands ended the year with some fantastic performances.

This winter we were treated to a Christmas Show in our living room! The snazzy performers dropped in for this very special event, singing all our favourite Christmas songs and dancing in their dazzling costumes!

After the show we gave them a big round of applause, with shouts of ‘encore!’ – hoping they’d play just one more song for us. We even snuck in a group photo with the stars. What a fantastic day it was, and inspired us to put on our own dancing shoes!

We had a wonderful Christmas time at Westlands, and were particularly proud of our Christmas tree. But if there’s one thing we like just as much, it’s our Christmas crackers with party hats and bad jokes inside!











The Pines



Fun celebrations and Christmas decorations took centre stage.

As the nights drew in, the decorations came out at The Pines, with sparkling lights and tinsel making us feel cosy at home. They were so good, we think they'd even give the famous Oxford Street decorations a run for their money!



We had a fantastic celebration of Carlos on his birthday and even found some of his favourite safari animals showing up for cake (OK, they were just balloons – but all the more cake left for us. Yum!).

And the festive fun continued as we showed-off our Christmas jumpers and opened all of our presents. There were so many gifts it was hard to fit them all in one photo! We had such a wonderful time sharing the festive period with each other.









Treetops, Rose Flat & Wishing Well



Whitmore Vale House sang and danced, and made the most of our nights in.



We were big and bold at Wishing Well, Rose Flat and Tree Tops this winter as we celebrated Victoria's birthday with songs, beautiful flowers and two - yes two! - birthday cakes. And as if this wasn't enough excitement, Victoria had so many birthday balloons we almost drifted off!

We all helped to welcome Bruce and Piotr to Whitmore Vale, and made it a true Wishing Well greeting with none other than a Karaoke dance party.



At Treetops we had a wonderful time getting into the Christmas spirit. A visit to the local garden centre with Piotr had it all, from Father Christmases to fancy fairy lights. Piotr really looked the part in his festive colours. We had lots of fun looking around and hoping to dig up a bargain!







Remembrance

Ode to John, by Ugochi



Oh John,
Father of Wishing Well Cottage,
Elder among us,
The steady heart in every room.
You moved through our days with quiet grace,
With humour warm enough to soften even the coldest morning.
You made us laugh with just a look,
A raised hand,
Or that familiar spark in your eyes
That told us you were still very much in the game.
You cared in gentle way,
Not through words,
But through the soft touch of your hand
Whenever you sensed our hurt.
Even in your own pain,
You somehow found room to carry ours.
In your last days, tired and weak,
You still found the strength to give joy.
Still played your ball games,
Still reached for snooker and Jenga
As though fun itself were medicine.
And even when your voice faded,
You somehow spoke louder than ever.
You still managed to keep us all on our toes,
Even without saying a word.
Your ways were unique,
Your signals unmistakable
You always knew how to get our attention
With a charm all your own.

John,
You were an amazing man,
A giant presence with a gentle soul.
A teacher of patience,
A giver of laughter,
A reminder that kindness leaves echoes.

We will miss you more than words can hold.
You left a warm, unforgettable mark
On every heart that had the honour of caring for you.
And though you are gone,
Your spirit lingers in every corridor,
Every smile you shaped,
Every memory you left behind.
Rest well, dear John.
We loved working with you,
We loved knowing you,
And we will never forget you.

Inside Whitmore Vale!

A peek at the projects we've been up to

Residents Demi, John and Phil met up with Amanda from Surrey County Council for some very important work.



Together, the expert trio help to improve the council's easy read documents for people across Surrey.

But improving easy read information is far from easy! With lots of reviewing and suggesting to be done, the team look at old documents and think about how to refresh them.

Demi, Phil and John find the right words and pictures to make things as easy to understand as possible.

So what was their latest task? They have lots to get through, but the big, exciting project is to help improve the council's learning disability and autism web pages.

This work is so useful for people from all over the county, helping them to have access to the information they need. Keep up the excellent work, team!

Did you know?

1. The project's called Get It Right! & began in 2023.
2. Our group are 1 of ONLY 4 teams from across Surrey.
3. Whitmore Vale were the VERY FIRST team to meet with Amanda!

Stuart's Swimathon Adventure! And for the event's 40th anniversary, he's aiming high.



Never one to turn down a good challenge, Stuart is set to take on his 8th Swimathon, and one of his toughest yet.

This year, Stuart will be swimming in a team with David and together their goal is not 50 lengths. Not 100. But 200 lengths of the pool!

Just imagine - this is further than swimming from Hurst Castle on the coast, all the way across the sea to the Isle of Wight... and back again!

It makes us tired just thinking about it! But this heroic goal is all in aid of Cancer Research and Marie Curie, causes close to Stuart's heart. We're so inspired by the training and hard work Stuart puts in, not to mention his sense of adventure!

If you'd like to sponsor Stuart or simply pass on some encouragement, just scan the code or get in touch. The big date is 21st March 2026. Good luck Stuart!







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Residents get into the ‘sling’ of things: Taking on the 1st aid challenge.





This winter, we invited a very small group of residents to try an exciting new activity with us!

It was a class called Basic Life Support, all about 1st aid: and what a success.

Nick, David, and John were model students and asked some fantastic questions. We also had a bit of fun! But more on this later...

The group learned how to put on bandages by making a sling to help support our arms, and a nice snug wrap for our wrists.

And then it was time for some disco music! Not just because we love to boogie, but for another very important reason. Did you know there is one song that really helps you to keep in time when performing CPR?

That’s right, it’s ‘Stayin’ Alive’ by the Bee Gees!

We finished the class with a cuppa, talking about what we’d learned, and the trio were given their own certificates for completing the course. Well done everyone!





The Hub



Where arts, crafts, fun and games join together once a week!

We absolutely love to use arts and crafts to express ourselves, and make something we can show to our friends and family.

Each week there's a new theme to explore, and some of our favourites were definitely Paddington Bear, Halloween Lanterns and the amazing Nnena Kalu!

All the staff make the Hub such fun, and a special thank you to Emma and our volunteers Amanda, James, Phil, Reece and Thomas.

Inspiration Spotlight - Nnena Kalu



Nnena's sculptures really inspire us. They also looked a lot of fun, so we thought we'd try it too!

We used all kinds of recycled materials to make our works of art. There were spare ribbons and tubing, bright tape and shiny coloured paper.

We started off with big rolls of cardboard, and then added lots of different layers on top to really catch the eye! Each of our creations were unique, with proud smiles all round!







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TRANSPORT CHAMPION

LATEST FROM STAGECOACH



Hi! My name is Phil and I'm the Whitmore Vale Transport Champion.

Check out my interview on our website: whitmorevale.co.uk

NightRider tickets

The price of a NightRider ticket, needed after 7pm, has increased from £3 to £4 per journey.
This ticket allows you to travel from Aldershot to Camberley and Guildford bus station to Park Barn

Blackwater Valley Timetable

There will be changes to services 1, 2, 6, 7, & 10
Service 1 has time changes - check before travel
Service 7 will include more times to Aldershot Tesco
Service 10 now runs on Sundays and Bank holidays

Further Service changes

Services 11 and 12 will be run by a different bus operator
Stagecoach will no longer run Alton town Service 9

Stay in touch

To keep up with what's happening at Whitmore Vale please visit **whitmorevale.co.uk** or join us on social media.

If you know anyone who would like to receive our newsletter, please ask them to contact us.

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