

## Colleague stories

### My time at 3rd Linslade Brownies

I began my time helping in Girl Guiding in 2008, starting at Rainbows when my daughters attended and then moving onto Brownies when they moved up.

I started as an occasional helper but that soon turned into helping each week and eventually becoming the treasurer as well in 2012.

When a girl joins Brownies after a few weeks they get enrolled and make the Brownie Promise which is 'I promise that I will do my best, to be true to myself and develop my beliefs, to serve the King and my community, to help other people and to keep the (Brownie) Guide law.' They are given a badge book when they enrol and can work at home to earn as many badges as they want to, which they can sew onto their uniform, while we will also use the meetings to work towards badges, which are given out at the end of term.

We always plan different activities with the girls each term and make it as fun as possible. We recently had 'Cookie', the support dog in to visit the girls, along with his trainer to explain to the girls how they train him and what he will do when he is placed with somebody. He received a lot of attention from the girls who loved having him visit.

Over the last couple of terms, we have been learning first aid and visited the local fire station twice to also learn about fire and water safety.

We also have craft sessions to make things for Mother's Day & Father's Day and in the Spring, we planted some seeds, and the brownies had to look after them and keep a plant diary to earn the 'grow your own' badge.

We always try and plan something fun for the end of term and at Christmas, one year we took the girls to the snow zone in Milton Keynes to enjoy a couple of hours messing around on the slopes.

My favourite thing about helping at Brownies is watching the young girls flourish, they arrive feeling shy, but over time make lots of new friends, have fun and really come into their own.

*Isabel*

**Isabel Hare**

Branch Manager – Harpenden & Leighton Buzzard Branch



## Colleague stories

### Befriending

Although I had previously thought of volunteering as 'something I might like to do in the future', I had not really given it any serious consideration before the summer of 2022.

During the Covid-19 pandemic I became acutely aware of what a difference volunteers can make to society. Almost overnight so many people had to become totally reliant upon the kindness of others just to survive, let alone thrive. I was so impressed when I turned up to my first inoculation to see the sheer number of amazing volunteers involved in the whole process, helping guide huge numbers of people to the right areas, reassuring them and making sure no-one was missed off the list.

I knew that Harpenden Building Society actively support colleagues who wish to do voluntary work, and all colleagues are generously given two paid days per year in which to do this. When I saw that the Harpenden Trust were advertising for volunteers for a variety of roles in the summer of 2022, it really piqued my interest. I arranged to meet up with their People Director for a coffee and chat and I decided straight away to apply for the role of a befriender.



Although it was way out of my comfort zone, that particular role appealed to me as I'm really interested in people, my husband always says I like to ask a lot of questions, but hopefully I'm a good listener too.

After submitting an application form, supplying a couple of references and passing a DB check, I was accepted. I was matched up with a potentially 'suitable' client and made arrangements to meet them the following week. At our first meeting, we were joined by another experienced member of the Trust who introduced us and explained how the process worked. I admit I was really apprehensive on the first occasion as I had no idea whether we would get on at all or find any common ground. However, any uncertainty I had was quickly put aside and volunteering as a befriender is one of the most rewarding things I have ever done. I actively look forward to meeting up each week with my befriender to have a coffee and catch up, and there is always much to catch up on. I have learned so much from my friend, who has lived an incredibly interesting life with many varied hobbies and stories to tell. Our conversations are wide ranging, enjoyable, informative and fun and we would never have met if it hadn't been for the Harpenden Trust.

Social isolation and loneliness amongst the elderly isn't going away. This has a huge impact on physical and mental health.

I would highly recommend trying volunteering in some capacity to anyone who might be considering it. It doesn't matter whether you have one spare hour each week, a day a month or as a one-off event, know that you will be making a difference, however small. You may well find it truly rewarding too.

*Kerry*

**Kerry Wybrow**  
PA to CEO





## Colleague *stories*

### St Albans and Harpenden Careers Fair

Along with over 40 local companies, the Society was delighted to be invited to join the St Albans and Harpenden Careers Fair on Monday 30th June. On a glorious sunny day, colleagues from several departments across the Society volunteered their time to attend the careers fair at the historic Rothamsted Research Conference Centre in Harpenden. The event brought together students from local secondary schools, Special Educational Need schools and colleges with employers and training providers.

Joining the opening ceremony, Daisy Cooper MP, Councillor Paul de Kort (Leader of St Albans City & District Council) and Victoria Collins MP, all spoke about the growth of career opportunities across the region and the importance of inspiring the next generation of workforce.

The tropical temperatures did not deter the attendees and throughout the day over 700 students from 14 different schools from Harpenden and the surrounding area attended the fair. Later in the day, an additional twilight session was held for students to attend with parents and carers.

The event provided a valuable platform for local school children to connect with local employers and understand the different pathways available for potential career paths. We enjoyed a day of enlightening conversations with engaged students, sharing information about the variety of roles, skills and knowledge that we have across the Society. The careers fair was a rewarding event where we connected with the local community and hopefully helped inspire young people on future career pathways.

*Elizabeth*

**Elizabeth Weatherhogg**

Senior Operations Manager for Mortgages