

Link

January 2026





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Link Magazine exists to be of service to the communities of Oakley, Deane, Newfound, Malshanger and Wootton St Lawrence. The sentiments expressed do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editorial team. The editors take no responsibility for the accuracy of the contents of submissions.

With the exception of trade ads all other items for publication may be made free of charge. Please submit articles by the date given below for publication the month following. The **Link** editors reserve the right to decline or edit any contributions.

Link web-site oakleylink.org.uk

Please e-mail copy to: editor@oakleylink.org.uk
or post to 8 Caithness Close, Oakley, RG23 7NG

Deadline for February 2026 issue: 15 January

Editorial

Happy New Year to all our readers!

Link is a magazine for the whole community, contributed to almost entirely by the community. We would like to thank everyone who has provided content over the last year (and years!).

So that there is a little more time for meetings to take place, and for plans to be completed for the next month's events, I will move the copy deadline to the **15th** of the month. This will be for a trial period. If we don't have any problems in doing the work to put Link together in the shorter time period, before being sent to the printer, it will then apply every month, except for the January editions.

I also extend thanks to the whole Link team and to our 'army' of distributors who ensure you receive your magazine at the start of every month. Because Link is distributed by volunteers, and also the Link team is made up of volunteers, we can continue to provide Link free to every house in Oakley and surrounding villages and hamlets. Thank you to all our loyal advertisers for facilitating this!

If you would like to offer your help with any aspect of Link, please talk to a team member (names below) or to me.

Chris Wassell

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Al's in Wonderland

Another rip-roaring production from The Oakley Pantomime Society (TOPS) our local drama group.

Titled “Al’s in Wonderland” it was loosely based on Alice in Wonderland and was, as usual written and directed by our local talented playwright, Ann Davis. I’m amazed how she manages to create so many different productions.

At the start we were treated to four cute white



Wonderland, as well as references to current Oakley and political topics.

One of the highlights was Kit and Kat leading the singing of the Oakley Hokey Cokey, which seems to include an extra word each year – this year’s version was The Low Key Blokey Choky Smoky Oakley Hokey Cokey, try singing that with a mouthful of chocolate! Alice suggested the Queen of Hearts held a JamFest which resulted in each of the groups of characters, including The Mad Chatters and The

rabbits who charmed the audience and led Alice, ably played by Anne Key, to Wonderland. The pantomime had all the usual well-loved components, lots of corny jokes which elicited groans and laughs in equal measure. The two “clowns” Kit and Kat started these with a range of chocolate jokes. There were the goodies and baddies with the audience enthusiastically booing the dastardly Duke and his Knight who plotted to take over



Gardeners, entertaining us with songs.

Finally, the servants teamed up with the Prince to make up a rock band called the Jammy Dodgers ably led by Jack Grant on guitar. Further music was provided by the talented Mike Hackston on keyboard. The numbers enthusiastically sung by the whole cast such as “Don’t Stop Me Now”, were incredible as were the bright costumes. In the end the Duke was overcome, the Prince was free to lead the life he wanted, and everyone lived happily ever after!

Altogether an enjoyable and entertaining evening for all generations.

Sheila Compton



Oakley Village Show - 8 August 2026

Put the date in your new diary!

In the meantime, the days are grey and the evenings are dark, and there's not a lot to watch on the television, so why not get cracking now on your entries for the show? It might be too early to plant fruit and vegetables, and you might not want to bake a Victoria sponge just yet, but you can make a start on some of the other classes. What better way to while away the time with some knitting or cross stitch? And what about getting some ideas for the art classes or photography? The writing could lend itself to some wintery writing as well.

You will find a list of craft, art photography and writing classes below. So, banish any January blues with thoughts of the summer village show and be inspired. A full list of classes will be printed in the show schedule which will be available in the Spring. Each exhibitor (i.e. one named person) is restricted to one entry per class, for all classes except Art and Photography which are restricted to two entries per exhibitor in each class. All craft items should be clean and not have been entered previously.

CRAFT

- A Diamond painting max size 20 cm x 20 cm
- A pair of wooden bookends
- A cross-stitch pin cushion
- A hat (knitted or crocheted), for a premature baby (hat circumference from 18 cm to max 26 cm) (may be donated to Southampton neonatal unit)
- A soft toy - knitted or crocheted
- Something new made from something old
- A crocheted scarf
- A local play area constructed of Lego
- A handmade card - made from a kit - any craft
- A handmade card - your original design - any craft, using some pearls
- A metal sculpture made out of used screws, nuts, bolts, etc
- An item of handmade lace
- A completed page from a colouring book for adults
- A small Christmas decoration for the tree - any craft
- A bookmark not made of lace, themed to a book. Display bookmark with book.
- A small, quilted item
- A free-standing kitchen roll holder, made of wood
- A piece of jewellery including pearls

PHOTOGRAPHY (Each exhibitor restricted to 2 entries per Class)

Sporting Life



A different angle
Mother Nature
Humanly Speaking
Amazing architecture

Each photograph entered must be separate, unframed and mounted on card. Photographs including mounts must be no larger than 30 cm x 30 cm.

ART (Each exhibitor restricted to 2 entries per Class)

A themed piece: 'Winter' in single or mixed media
Water colours and/or pastels
Oils and/or Acrylic

Any other medium such as line drawing, sketches, and other techniques

All signatures must be covered. All paintings and drawings must have a wire or string by which they can be hung. Hooks will be supplied.

CREATIVE WRITING

Entries should be typed with double line spacing and must be original work. Do not write your name on your entry. Closing date 10 July 2026

A poem. Title 'The Voice'

A short story (max 1000 words). Title 'The Voice'

A limerick with a title/
theme of your choice.

Ann Davis
Oakley Community Action
Community Action





Report from the Parish Council

A very Happy New Year to you all from everyone at the Parish Council! We hope you enjoyed a peaceful and joyful festive season, and we look forward to another productive year working together for the benefit of our community.

We are pleased to announce our next Councillors' Chat Session, taking place on Tuesday 3 February 1 pm – 2 pm at Jolly Olly's. These informal drop-in sessions offer a chance to speak directly with your councillors, raise local issues, share ideas, or simply enjoy a friendly conversation. Everyone is welcome, and no appointment is required.

A reminder that our Christmas tree recycling collection point is now open at St John's Piece, where real Christmas trees can be left for environmentally friendly disposal. Please ensure all decorations, lights, and stands are removed before dropping off your tree. The last collection will take place Saturday 31 January.

We are also pleased to share that we currently have a handyperson vacancy. The advert is displayed on the village noticeboards and below. If you are interested in applying or would like further information, please contact the Clerk, who will be happy to assist.

As we begin planning for the year ahead, we continue to focus on maintaining village amenities, enhancing green spaces, and supporting local community activities. Your feedback plays an important role in shaping these priorities, so please do join us at a chat session or contact the Parish Office with any suggestions or concerns.

Finally, we extend our heartfelt thanks to all volunteers, local groups, and residents whose enthusiasm and support help keep our parish vibrant and welcoming. Here's to a healthy, happy, and community-spirited year ahead.

*Kelly Green - Assistant Clerk,
assistantclerk@oakleydeane-pc.gov.uk*

Oakley & Deane Parish Council

Handyperson Vacancy

About the Role

If you have a few spare days each month and enjoy hands-on work, we'd love to hear from you.

Duties include:

Grass cutting and hedge trimming

Minor repairs and general maintenance



Assisting with small parish projects
Supporting the upkeep of parish facilities and open spaces

Cleaning and upkeep of bus shelters, noticeboards and other public areas

✖ Requirements We're looking for someone with:

A practical, proactive, hands-on approach

Experience in basic maintenance work

The ability to work independently

A full UK driving licence

The ability to safely use and maintain tools and equipment

✓ Provided by the Council

All necessary tools, equipment, and safety gear will be supplied where required.

⌚ Salary

To be confirmed and dependent on experience.

If you're interested in helping keep our parish running smoothly, please get in touch for more details or to apply:

clerk@oakleydeane-pc.gov.uk.





OAKLEY & DEANE PARISH COUNCIL

COUNCILLORS CHAT – COME SAY HELLO!

Tuesday 3 February

1 pm – 2 pm

Jolly Olly's

 **We want to hear from YOU!**

Whether it's ideas, suggestions, concerns, or questions – come along and have a friendly chat with your Parish Councillors.

 **Talk to us about what matters to you:**

- Local improvements
- Community events
- Village issues
- Your ideas for Oakley & Deane

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Oakley & Deane Parish Council

The Parish Council is currently reviewing the condition of benches and seats throughout the village to ensure they remain clean, safe, and well maintained for everyone to enjoy.

We are reaching out to relatives and friends connected to memorial benches within the parish. If you or someone you know has a family link to a bench with a memorial plaque, we would love to hear from you.

Your input will help us ensure these special places are cared for with the respect they deserve.

Please contact the Assistant Clerk on:
assistantclerk@oakleydeane-pc.gov.uk or 07951 415229



Regular Activities at Village Halls

Andover Road Village Hall (contact 781229)

Mon	9:30 am	Pilates
	11:30 am	Workout to music
	2:15 pm	Badminton
	7:30 pm	Table Tennis
Tues	9:30 am	Marching
	2:15 pm	Badminton
	7:30 pm	WI or Yoga
Wed	10:30 am	Workout to music
Thurs	8 pm	Badminton
Fri	9:30 am	Trinity Baby Class.
	6:30 pm	Yoga

East Oakley Village Hall (green hut)

Monday	am	AVAILABLE
Monday	pm	Oakley Afternoon WI (3rd Monday of month)
Monday	eve	Oakley Stitchers (1st Monday of month)
Tuesday	am	Love to Move
Tuesday	pm	Art Class
Tuesday	eve	Basingstoke Air Rifle & Pistol Club
Wednesday	am	Coffee & Chat
Wednesday	pm	Speedy yoga
Wednesday	eve	AVAILABLE
Thursday	am	Jiggywrigglers
Thursday	pm	AVAILABLE
Thursday	eve	AVAILABLE
Friday	am	Chair Yoga
Friday	pm	AVAILABLE
Friday	eve	AVAILABLE
Saturday		Available for parties
		Occasional Jumble Sales
Sundays		Available for parties

For details of any of the bookings or to book the hall please phone 07788 423252

email booking@oakleygreenhut.co.uk or treasurer @oakleygreenhut.co.uk

St John's Centre

Mon – Fri 9 am Acorns Nursery



ANNIE'S Oakley Charity Shop

18 Meon Road, Oakley, RG23 7AL

Registered charity 1063036 – Annie's Orphans.

Monday to Saturday 10 am – 4 pm

JANUARY 2025 at Annie's Oakley

A HUGE thank you to all who supported our Christmas Shop and our Christmas raffle – we hope you were lucky!! Now we look forward to seeing you in 2026.

We have refreshed our shelves and walls with new donations of curtains, linen, decorative items, pictures and mirrors - come and see for yourself.

Good selection of Winter clothing and footwear for men and women- come and browse!

Toys, games and puzzles 1/2 price in school holidays.

Keep an eye on our Facebook page and Calling Oakley for the latest news of our great offers and our Half Price Days!

We welcome saleable donations – please bring them into the shop. If you have large items, please discuss with staff before unloading your car!

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Feature



Hampshire County Councillor Report -

Juliet Henderson

Protecting our Hampshire landscapes

At a meeting of the full council, I tabled a motion to protect Hampshire's National Landscapes. There is nothing more restorative than a beautiful landscape. We heard recently from the Princess of Wales how nature really helped her recovery, and I think all of us know how we've come back from taking in a beautiful landscape feeling restored. Ultimately, this motion is about strengthening what already makes Hampshire special. It supports wildlife, protects landscape character, enhances community wellbeing, and it ensures that future generations inherit a countryside that is not diminished on our watch.

This month sees the launch of Hampshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy – shaped by two years of collaboration with partners to embed nature recovery into Hampshire's future. We are lucky in Hampshire to have an exceptional natural environment where 23% of land is already designated for nature – but wildlife has declined sharply, so our plan is all about managing more land for nature in the future. We need everyone to help, so that together, we can protect and enhance our natural environment.

Fostering-We need more Foster Carers

Residents interested in fostering can learn more and take their first step by visiting Hampshire County Council Fostering Service. With the colder months upon us, the Hampshire County Council campaign encourages people to consider whether fostering could fit into their family life. Told from the perspective of a foster carer's birth child, a new heartfelt video showcases the warmth, friendship, and lasting bonds that fostering can bring for the whole family. Every child deserves a safe and loving home. This winter, we're asking Hampshire families to consider fostering.

Hampshire County Council's Fostering Service has been working hard to reduce the number of children coming into care. In Hampshire, the gap between the number of children needing a loving home, and the number of foster carers available, continues to widen. For every child we can find a home, others are waiting. Carers are not required to own their own homes or to have previous childcare experience and will receive excellent training and competitive allowances. Ongoing support is provided by a dedicated social worker and via the Hampshire Hive project, a support network of local groups which create an 'extended family' for foster carers and their children in communities across Hampshire.



Mayoral Elections Postponed

The Government has informed us that it will delay the planned elections for new Mayors in four areas of England, including Hampshire. This means the Mayoral election originally scheduled for May 2026 will be postponed by two years, until May 2028.

The decision to propose a delay has been made solely by central Government: none of the upper tier local authorities (Hampshire County Council, Southampton and Portsmouth City Councils and Isle of Wight Council) requested a postponement of the May elections. The rationale given is to allow the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) process to be completed first, before Mayors take office.

Leaders of Hampshire's upper-tier authorities have stressed that the decision to delay the mayoral election was made solely by the Government. In a joint statement, the leaders of Hampshire County Council, the Isle of Wight Council, Portsmouth City Council and Southampton City Council confirmed that none of them requested the postponement. They said all four had instead asked for further clarification on the implications of the Government's move.

The statement said that while it is "regrettable" that the mayoral election will be pushed back, the priority remains progressing the region's devolution deal. It added: "This process promises greater local decision-making authority, increased investment, and stronger representation for our region.

"Given the size and significance of Hampshire and the Solent, it is essential that our regional perspective is represented at the national level. Until a mayor is elected, we suggest that, once formed, the Leaders of the Combined County Authority act as the representatives on the Council of Nations and Regions, so that our economy and communities have the influence they deserve."

Hampshire's County Council leader Nick Adams-King said he had been "reassured" that the delay will not affect the creation of the new combined authority or the transfer of powers and funding from Westminster. Cllr Adams-King said: "Devolution will still begin next year, bringing real benefits to Hampshire and the Solent. "Given the size and importance of Hampshire and the Solent, it is vital that our voice is heard nationally."

Juliet Henderson





Flu & Covid Update

Flu and Covid viruses continue to circulate and, whilst the Covid autumn vaccination programme has now ended, we can still give the flu vaccine to the over-65s as well as the under-65s with an underlying health condition. So please do check in with the practice if you have not had a vaccine. You can also call 119 to find out where else the vaccine is available. A full list of vaccinations and who should be getting them is available on nhs.uk/vaccinations/

Winter lung health guide from Asthma & Lung UK

For people living with a lung condition, the risk of ending up in A&E doubles in the winter. This is because things like cold weather, winter viruses, damp and mould can make symptoms worse.

To support everyone with a lung condition, Asthma + Lung UK have created a **free winter guide** to help people protect themselves and stay well this winter. To get the guide, patients just need to answer a short survey about their lung condition, symptoms and how winter affects them. They will then receive a series of emails with free, personalised health advice from Asthma + Lung UK's in-house GP. The guide will help people to understand what might set off their symptoms during the winter and provide personalised tips to reduce their risk of becoming seriously unwell.

For more information on how to look after your lungs, please visit asthmaandlung.org.uk/notjustaseason or call the Asthma and Lung UK helpline on 0300 222 5800.

Five Simple Ways to Look After Your Health in the New Year

A new year is a great opportunity to focus on small, positive changes that can make a big difference to your health and wellbeing. Here are a few ideas to consider:

1. Move a Little More

Regular activity helps boost mood, energy, sleep, and heart health. You don't have to join a gym—brisk walking, dancing, gardening, or short home workouts all count. NHS advice: nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/

2. Eat a Balanced, Colourful Diet

Adding more fruit, vegetables, wholegrains, and lean proteins can support your immune system and reduce the risk of long-term conditions. Small swaps—like choosing wholemeal bread or adding an extra portion of veg—can make a big difference. NHS

advice: nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/

3. Prioritise Sleep

Good sleep supports mental and physical health. Try keeping a regular sleep schedule, reducing screen time before bed, and creating a calming evening routine. NHS advice: nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-wellbeing-tips/how-to-fall-asleep-faster-and-sleep-better/

4. Look After Your Mental Wellbeing

Checking in with yourself emotionally is just as important as looking after your body. Talking to someone you trust, staying connected, and making time for activities you enjoy can help. NHS advice: nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/

5. Keep Up With Health Checks

Whether it's attending routine screenings, checking your blood pressure, or reviewing your medications, staying on top of regular health checks can catch issues early and keep you well. NHS advice: nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-health-check/

We would also like to highlight a very useful service, called the Priority Services Register, which is free to join and can offer invaluable help to support households who need extra help with everyday energy matters like bills, and also in the unlikely event of a power cut, gas or water supply interruption. It helps utility companies, including energy suppliers, electricity, gas and water networks look after customers who have extra communication, access or safety needs. So do visit the website to find out if you or a loved one should sign up. The website is easy to navigate and can be found here thepsr.co.uk/

Coeliac UK North Hampshire Group

Christmas dinner

3 0 of us had our Christmas dinner at BCoT's restaurant. A three-course gluten free meal with mince pies and coffee. The food was excellent and the service as well. Anyone going into Basingstoke for a meal should give BCoT a try as the food is freshly prepared and it helps local students learning their trade.

New Year's Resolution – Join our Member Review Panel

Become a member of our Member Review Panel and help us select what research to fund. You can have an active and important role in research and there are many ways you can be involved:

- completion of a survey from home either online or by post
- completion of a survey away from home, for example, in a supermarket
- focus group
- one to one interview, face to face or over the



phone

- gluten free food trial
- trials for new treatments
- providing a biological sample, for example, blood, urine, saliva, etc.

Next meet-up

Next group meeting in the Waitrose cafe in Basingstoke on Wednesday 21 January between 10:30 am and 12 pm. If you haven't joined us before, look out for at least one member of our committee wearing a bright orange Coeliac UK top.

Contacts:

To contact the Local North Hants Group, please email northhampshire@coeliac.org.uk

Join our Facebook page Coeliac UK North Hampshire Local Group, or see our events on the North

Hampshire Coeliac UK website page
www.coeliac.org.uk/local-groups/north-hampshire

Dave West

Conservation



Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust

The ghost of the fields

If you've ever caught a glimpse of a pale, silent shape drifting over a Hampshire meadow at dusk, you may have been lucky enough to witness one of the region's most captivating residents: the barn owl.

Barn owls are perfectly engineered for life as nocturnal hunters. Their feathers are soft and velvety, specially adapted to silence the sound of their wingbeats. This allows them to float through the air almost noiselessly as they quarter the fields in search of prey. Their hearing is so acute they can pinpoint a mouse rustling beneath vegetation in complete darkness, guided by the asymmetric placement of their ears and their iconic facial disk, which funnels sound like a satellite dish.

Across Hampshire's farmland, river valleys and downland edges, barn owls favour a mosaic of rough

grassland where field voles, shrews and mice live. A single pair can consume thousands of small mammals each year, making them one of nature's most effective forms of pest control. They nest in tree cavities, old barns and quiet outbuildings - hence their name - and will often return to the same nesting site year after year. When conditions are good, they may raise two broods in a single season.

With their heart-shaped faces, ink-black eyes and ghost-white plumage, barn owls possess an almost supernatural beauty - one that has long inspired folklore across the countryside. Throughout history, barn owls have been known by many different nicknames, such as 'ghost owl', 'church owl' and 'screech owl'. But the name 'demon owl', in particular, illustrates how they were considered by some rural populations - something not so difficult to understand when you hear their piercing shrieks and hissing calls.

But, despite their resilience, barn owls face mounting pressures. They have been impacted by loss of rough grass habitat where they hunt their prey, nesting sites, organochlorine pesticides such as DDT in the 1950s and 1960s and road collisions.

Nature reserves managed by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust offer great opportunities to observe barn owls in their natural habitat. Hockley Meadows in Winchester is a known hotspot for these beautiful birds, where visitors can watch them glide over the meadows and hunt in the early morning or late afternoon. Farlington Marshes near Portsmouth is a must-visit for birdwatchers, with the reserve attracting barn and short-eared owls.

For more information visit the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust website: hiwwt.org.uk/wildlife-explorer/birds

Helen Skelton-Smith



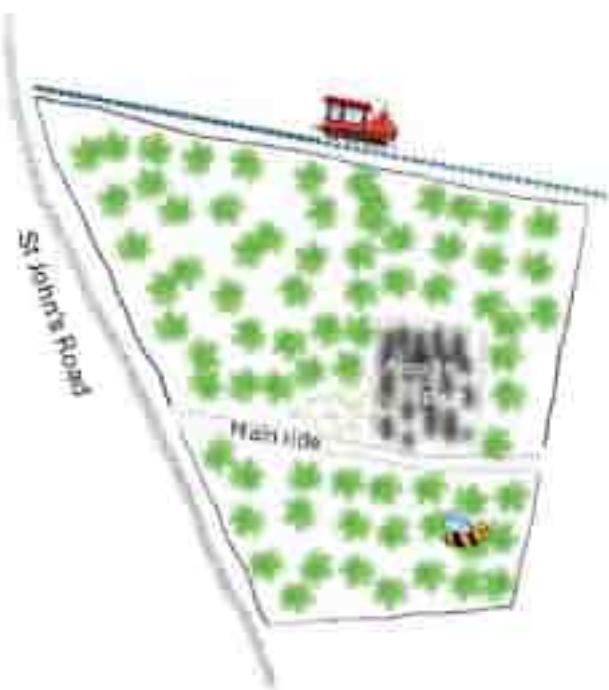
Barn owl photo by Russell Savory

Conservation



Oakley Woodlands Group

Happy New Year! As usual at this time of year The Oakley Woodlands Group switches its activities from Cowdown to St John's Copse. We will be coppicing



an area towards the end of the main ride which was last coppiced eight to ten years ago. This means that most of the hazel will be an ideal size for coppicing, so we should be able to extract a good supply of pea sticks and bean poles.

If you are planning your vegetable planting, it is not too early to drop us an email to reserve your sticks and poles. This helps us ensure we have sufficient prepared. We will be surrounding the area with a dead hedge and temporary plastic fencing to protect the regrowth from grazing deer. Although this is visually intrusive, it is effective and is normally taken down after a couple of seasons.

It will be challenging to complete the coppice by the end of March, which is when we surrender the woods to the amorous wildlife, so we may complete the fencing in April. However, more hands make light work, so volunteers are always welcome. St John's is easier to access than Cowdown, so why not pop in and see what we are up to. You might even be able to blag a biscuit if you time it right!

Work party dates: Saturday 10 and 24, Wednesday 14 and 28. 10 am to 1 pm in St John's Copse, St John's road.

Email: oakleywoodlands@gmail.com

Alan Merry

Basingstoke and Deane

More wildflower meadows to boost biodiversity in Basingstoke and Deane

Bell orchids and kidney vetch are among the thousands of wildflowers set to spring up in Basingstoke and Deane over the coming years after two acres of new meadows were planted at the end of last year.

More than five kilograms of the seeds that were sown were gathered and hand sorted by volunteers from Natural Basingstoke. The rest were collected by Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council's rangers, using a brush harvester.

The final seed-sowing session took place at Crabtree Plantation on Tuesday (25 November), where the council's rangers were joined by volunteers from the Black Dam and Crabtree Conservation Group to plant new meadows in the area.

This followed similar sessions already undertaken elsewhere in Basingstoke by the council's rangers at Gershwin Road in Brighton Hill and at Lyford Road in Norden.

Cabinet Member for Climate and Ecological Emergency Cllr Chris Tomblin said: "Working with local conservation groups and Natural Basingstoke, we're continuing our work to create even more wildflower meadows in green spaces across the borough.

"As well as looking beautiful when they start to bloom, these wildflowers will give wildlife including bees and butterflies the food and shelter they need to thrive. Everything we do like this makes a difference for nature and I encourage everyone to see how they can get involved."

In similar planting sessions in 2024, volunteers from 10 nature groups, Natural Basingstoke and the council's rangers sowed seeds across over 14 acres of land. The wildflowers, which will provide food for pollinators including bees and butterflies, are now starting to sprout.

The council's work with volunteers to enhance and create habitats supports the biodiversity strategy it adopted last year, which guides its efforts to reverse the decline in nature recovery and tackle the ecological emergency.

Opportunities to make a difference for the borough's plants and wildlife by becoming a local nature volunteer can be found at NaturalBasingstoke.org.uk

More information about the council's work to support nature recovery is at basingstoke.gov.uk/ecology.

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Feature



Creating a new year/new you, with Oakley Stitchers CIC

The new year can be many things for many people....

...daunting, exciting, full of hope, frightening, sad, an adventure, lonely, unknown or an empty space to explore and develop.

Stitchers could bring to you...

Confidence, experiences, community and purpose to encourage 2026 to be a year of you!

Oakley Stitchers CIC is about so much more than sewing and knitting: we're a welcoming organisation for volunteers of all kinds, around Basingstoke and further afield.

People join to become part of a common purpose, meet like-minded people, learn at their own pace or gently rebuild confidence and skills. All while providing a range of free items to others facing challenging or difficult times.

Our 12 open community groups, located around Basingstoke and Deane, bring people together around shared passions and projects. Friendships grow naturally through learning, conversations, interests and creativity. Shared experiences and passion

The Wote St Club is warm and relaxed space offering affordable craft, knitting and sewing supplies while helping reduce waste. It's as much a place to come and chat and connect, book a table for your own sales or group, as it is to find a bargain.

Loneliness, mental health and isolation affect people of all ages, especially during illness, unemployment, or major life changes. We recognise many hobbies can be quite solitary and identify the benefits of meeting up with others. Oakley Stitchers offers a safe, friendly spaces, where everyone can feel included and are welcomed for who they are, not for what they can do.

Our workshops enable people learn new skills, refresh old ones, improving confidence and pride in personal abilities.

Creative activity is also a powerful support for mental wellbeing. Many people find that making things with their hands helps ease stress and anxiety. The ongoing mental benefits, combined with safe, friendly support and conversation, creates a calm and uplifting environment.

Members often describe Oakley Stitchers as somewhere they can relax, be themselves, and feel accepted without pressure. Some go on to identify new hobbies, volunteer with us gaining skills and confidence to return to work. Others simply enjoy having a reason to get out of the house again.

We are a not-for-profit

community organisation, driven by support, compassion, creativity and people caring for one another. What grows here is not just ability, but confidence, connection and quiet strength.

Our amazing volunteers are at the heart of everything we do. Their time, care and commitment reach far beyond our own activities, supporting individuals, schools, mental health, community organisations and hospital units across the UK.

Find out how you can be part of it at:
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encourage wellbeing, purpose and pride, whether you're enjoying your own project or supporting the work we do for others. For many, the first feelings associated with us are belonging and fun.

Our community shop on a Monday and Tuesday @



Oakley Act of Remembrance 2025
9th November at St John's Garden of Remembrance



Village



All photos are by Colin Edwards

Young Oakley



Hello from St Leonard's Pre-School

Happy New Year! We are looking forward to a busy and exciting 2026!

Pitter patter raindrops, pitter patter raindrops I'm wet through, so are you! We are starting the New Year with an ongoing focus on weather. Using buckets and jugs the children will be collecting rain, taking our flags outside to see which way the wind is blowing, having ice outside to see what happens to it and how it changes.



The children will be looking for frosty cobwebs and seeing if they can make dragon breath. We will be looking at the sky to watch the clouds and talking about the different colours and what a black cloud means. Hopefully we will also be able to find the sun and some blue sky!

This photo is of the Gingerbread families the children made during "Gingerbread Man" week. We had a volunteer parent or



grandparent to help with the cooking each day.

The photo below is of a kitten who came to visit the children. They were able to stroke or hold the kitten. They learnt how to look after him, what he ate, where he slept and

which toys he liked to play with.

If you would like to know more about the preschool, please contact us on 07772 378265 or email preschool@oww.church or look at our website stleonards-preschool.co.uk.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Caroline Edwards, Manager

News from Testbourne

Our Annual Christmas Fayre on Saturday 29 November was a wonderful showcase of community spirit and festive cheer. With nearly 800 visitors attending, this year's event was one of the busiest yet, offering plenty of opportunities to prepare for Christmas, enjoy delicious food, and take part in fun activities.

Thanks to the dedication and hard work of our PTFA, the fayre raised an impressive £2,616, and with match funding this total will increase even further. Their commitment to planning and delivering such a successful event is greatly appreciated.

Our students played an important role throughout the day. Year 7 students ran eight creative stalls featuring games, magic tricks and festive items, raising nearly £250 to add to the PTFA total, a fantastic achievement for their first school event. Our Year 10 transition prefects supported the PTFA by welcoming visitors, assisting on stalls, and guiding younger students. Their professionalism and enthusiasm were outstanding.

Kerry Mitchell

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Young Oakley



News from Cranbourne

Happy New Year to all of our Cranbourne Community! We had a jam-packed Half Term in the run-up to Christmas, filled with festivities, school trips, Rewards' Evenings and more. As a new term begins, we look forward to all the exciting things we have planned for 2026!



The Cranbourne Vocal Band visited Rowan Lodge Care Home to spread some Christmas cheer by singing carols to the residents and our Christmas Shop opened for students to select a gift for a family member. We enjoyed a tasty Christmas Lunch on Wednesday 17 December courtesy of our fantastic Canteen team.

Our first Winter Showcase was a huge success, with students delivering exceptional drama sketches and musical performances. Performing Arts Club

treated our audience to a sneak peak of the upcoming production of Guys and Dolls. We can't wait for performances to start in February!

Mr Juliff took students to London's West End to watch a matinee performance of The Lion King. Eligible students attended performances of Macbeth, Songs From

The Shows and the annual Christmas Concert at Queen Mary's College as a reward for collecting 250 House Points. The level of talent and professionalism on display from the college students was phenomenal and our students had a fantastic time.

Year 9 students had the opportunity to visit either Reading or Southampton Solent University where they explored the campus, participated in a Q and A session with the student ambassadors and attended a taster lecture. These trips allow students to gain insight into university life and begin thinking about



their future aspirations.

On Friday 12 December, students supported our Green Cranbourne initiative at the annual Big Cranbourne Clear Up where they ventured into the roads surrounding Cranbourne armed with litter pickers. Be sure to check our social media channels for updates on what we're doing to help make Cranbourne more sustainable.

Chloe-Mai Parfitt

Local girls attend Westminster Abbey

Two Basingstoke girls were extremely honoured and excited to have been invited by the Princess to attend her annual Royal Christmas Carol Service at Westminster Abbey on Friday 5 December. Scarlett and Sienna Cripps received the Royal invitations from Buckingham Palace due to all their ongoing work and money raised for local charities.

The annual Christmas carol concert at Westminster Abbey guests included royals, celebrities and local heroes who have helped their communities. Westminster Abbey was dotted with Christmas trees, and the 1,600 guests heard

a mix of traditional carols, music and poems from actors such as Kate Winslet and Chiwetel Ejiofor - and a Bible reading from the pulpit by Prince William.

The Princess of Wales theme of the service, held in the candle-lit Abbey, was kindness and showing love to others.

Aby Cripps

Ladies Societies



Basingstoke Ladies Probus Happenings!

At the 32nd AGM of the Basingstoke Ladies' Probus Club, Alison Wood took up her role as President for the ensuing year of this social club for retired and semi-retired women with professional backgrounds or supervisory business experience, as reflected in the acronym PROBUS. At this regular monthly gathering in the BCoT restaurant followed by, as always, a delicious 3-course lunch, outgoing President Janet Fagg handed Alison the



ribbon of office.

More recently the Club was treated to a fascinating talk by Hampshire Councillor Rhydian Vaughan



MBE who, as a war historian and a passionate battlefields guide, has previously proved a very interesting speaker. On this occasion he held his audience spellbound as he detailed the sinking of the battleship, Bismarck on 27 May, 1941 in a battle which lasted just 16 minutes and which resulted in what was said to be the Royal

Navy's biggest

disaster. Also the sinking of HMS Hood with the loss of 1415 men - just 3 survived after being in the water for 3 hours.

The Bismarck shortly met its own demise resulting from, initially, a torpedo fired from an antiquated Swordfish biplane from HMS Ark Royal, which jammed her rudders. Thus, unable to manoeuvre, she was finally sunk by two torpedoes from HMS Devonshire. 2,090 lives were lost and for some time rescue efforts were made by British warships, ultimately saving 114 personnel but, when it was thought that a U-Boat had been spotted, the rescue had to be abandoned.

The membership of this Ladies Probus Club covers a wide spread of experiences stimulating interesting conversations which, together with presentations by guest speakers, makes for lively interchanges. Outside visits, when BCoT is shut in summer, have recently included a private tour of Stratfield Saye and a visit to a speaker's beautiful Japanese garden.

Also the opportunity for theatre visits: several had attended the latest stunning production by BATS, Basingstoke's own excellent amateur theatre company, of 'Come From Away'. This deals with the hospitality shown to those on the 38 planes diverted to Newfoundland following '9/11' - particularly emotional viewing for one member who was actually in New York on that dreadful day.

For more information and enquiries about possible membership, please contact: Admin Secretary: reverendjane@hotmail.co.uk - 07754 296994

Ann Vicars

Rooksdown Revellers

Radishes meet Secret Santa at The Rooksdown Revellers WI??

Well, not literally, but an odd combination in one evening! At the final meeting in 2025 of the RRWI and, with this Christmas looming large, one of their number shared her experiences from a visit to Mexico City over the last Christmas period. With the accent on food and festivals, it became clear that Christmas 'down Mexico way' is a very different affair from turkey and tinsel back home. Firstly it is a season running from 12 December to 6 January but, secondly, at one location on this island is celebrated 'The Night of the Radishes', an event which attracts over 100 competitors and thousands of visitors!



(Continued on page 28)

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Ladies Societies



Annually, on 23 December in Oaxaca City, Mexico, local artisans compete to carve oversized radishes into scenes for prizes in various categories, most commonly representing the nativity.

After that excitement, Christmas Eve sees family gatherings and gift-giving, followed by a quiet and relaxing Christmas Day. On New Year's Day, the speaker explained that it is common in some areas to throw lentils over the heads of others for good luck! Slightly less messy, another New Year's Eve

tradition involves eating 12 grapes at midnight, one grape with each chime of the clock and each grape representing a wish for each month of the coming year.

Dragging themselves back from the warmth and fun of Mexico to the reality of The Sycamore Hall, Winklebury, where the Revellers meet on the 4th Thursday of each month, the 'warmth' of the members and the 'fun' of the evening continued, after snacks and 'nibbles' provided by all, with the rather more tame but no less welcome 'Secret Santa'. Efficiently orchestrated by President Nicola, each member proceeded to Santa's table in turn to select their gift from - well, Santa of course!

The next gathering, the first of 2026, will be an Indian feast to bring warmth to a probably chilly

January. If interested to join these WI revellers in their revelry, please contact pat.dominey152@icloud.com.

Annie Vicars

Oakley Afternoon WI

November 2025 meeting report

Our speaker this month was Penny Jubin, a glass decorator, who gave members and guests a brief history of glass decorating from Egyptian times to the present day. After the talk several members then made their own Christmas tree decorations. Penny had also brought along some lovely glass gifts which were available to purchase.

Birthday cards and flowers were presented, the raffle was drawn, and Janet thanked Penny for a lovely afternoon before closing the meeting.

Our monthly meetings are held on the 3rd Monday of the month at East Oakley Village Hall (the Green Hut). Visitors are made most welcome at the meetings and are also invited to come along to the coffee mornings held at the Barley Mow on the last Monday of the month.

For further details please contact Janet on 01256 782734.

Janine Vickers

Feature



News From Jolly Olly's Coffee

Shop

Happy New Year!

Monday opening

From 5 January, we will be opening on Mondays. Sam and Janet are going to make a fabulous team together. They will look forward to welcoming you!

A New One!

We have a new Team Member joining us this month. Helen McGivern will be working with Mary and me on Fridays. Welcome, Helen!

Introducing...

Recently, a new customer started visiting Jolly Olly's. This is a little about her...

"My name is Vlada, I'm from Ukraine and moved to the UK in 2022. Since then, I worked full time, but as a "neurospicy" person found it so exhausting that I had to quit after some major depression episodes. Since then, I decided to follow my dream to create art and share it with the world! The goal for my business is to be accessible... environmentally friendly,



supportive. I want to spread love, acceptance and education about people and situations of all sorts. In the nearest future I plan to donate 10% to important causes."

Vlada is in the process of producing her first colouring book. It is about growing up and living as an autistic woman and the situations they deal with daily. Vlada's drawings (for adults or children) are very thought provoking. She has given me some to share with you. If you would like to have a look or colour one, please do ask. I have invited Vlada to come along to the shop on Thursday 15 January between 2 pm and 3 pm. She will bring examples of her work to show anyone who would like to know more and will be available to talk more about what she does.

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new at the
Chapel by the
Pond.

£1-50

Oakley Methodist Church

Church News



Oakley Methodist Church

All welcome at the Methodist Church coffee morning on Tuesday 13 January and Tuesday 27 January from 10:30 am to 12 noon. £1.50 for a bottomless cup of tea or coffee and biscuits. Come and meet old friends and new. The charity for the year is Dementia UK. We look forward to welcoming the Woodland well-being walkers at the end of their walk.

Trish Kinchington

Kintsugi wellbeing courses

We are delighted to announce that our next Kintsugi wellbeing courses are starting again in January 2026.

Our passion is to reduce stress levels in our busy days so we can live happier and healthier lives. Inevitably things go wrong - relationship breakdowns, financial problems, health issues, work issues, etc, and we can get stuck in a downward spiral.

Discover how to handle the ups and downs of life through our 10-week courses. Learn how to:

- Overcome stress, worries and fears
- Nurture special relationships
- Deal skilfully with increasing demands of modern life

Our 10-week courses start:

Monday 5 January 2026, 1:30 – 3:30 pm
Or Thursday 8 January 2026, 7 – 9 pm
At St Leonard's Centre, Oakley

Oakley

Methodist Church

Services at 10:30 am

January 4 Rev Claire Simpson Communion
January 11 Mr Neil Graham
January 18 Mrs Sarah Whitford
January 25 Rev Martin Beale

COFFEE MORNING

Tuesdays Jan 13 and 27
10:30 am to 12 noon

£1.50



All welcome at the Chapel by the Pond
www.bmchurch.org.uk/churches/oakley.html

This course is a safe and confidential place for a group of 12 people to strengthen resilience, courage and wellbeing. To register your interest or secure a place, as places go quickly, please email:

kintsugihope@oww.church

Lynda Cant

Local News



Whitchurch Silk Mill News

'The Austen' Silk Scarf

Our limited-edition scarf, woven from signature satin stripe silk, is now available in the shop and online. Its jewel-like colours complement the exclusive ribbon collection created in 2025 with Jane Austen's House to mark the 250th anniversary of Jane's birth.

Upcoming Workshops & Tours

Darning Workshop – 16 Jan, 2 - 4 pm. Learn to mend holes and choose the right yarn in this beginners' class. All tools provided. Tickets: £35.

Silk Production Tour – 3 Feb, 11 am - 12 pm. Step behind the scenes at Britain's oldest working silk mill. See looms in action and hear stories of weavers past. Sensible footwear required; some areas have limited accessibility. Tickets: £25. Book in advance.

(continued on page 33)

LINK magazine

Basingstoke Bridge Club

If you want to learn the game of bridge – please come and join us

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Lessons start on Tuesday 13th January 2026 at 9.30am in our new extended facilities

For those new to the game or a novice wishing to improve their bridge – with structured lessons and varied practice sessions – late entries are always accepted

A Block of Ten Beginners Lessons (3 hours each) cost £60 with support material (learn at your own pace)

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

To find out more, please contact: basbridgebridgeclub@gmail.com
Or visit www.basbridgebridgeclub.co.uk

Basingstoke Bridge Club is a community run bridge group. Address: 100 Station Road, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG22 2JG.

Barry Hare

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Local News



Weave a Wall Hanging – 12 Feb, 10 am or 2 pm. Create your own wall hanging using traditional techniques in a relaxing workshop. All materials provided. Tickets: £60.

Current Exhibition – Until 22 Feb 2026

We're hosting Visible Threads by textile artist Jane Sanders, known for her quirky mixed-media portraits of iconic musicians stitched on a 1960s Singer sewing machine. Learn more on our What's On page.

Save the Date: Flower Festival, 19 to 21 June 2026

Join us for our first Flower Festival, featuring handmade floral displays. We're inviting knitters, crocheters, and pom-pom makers to help create a stunning garden of daffodils, tulips, roses, and more. Patterns and details are available from the Mill. Celebrate creativity, community, and craft, one flower at a time!



Sue Tapliss

Probus Club at RNLI Calshot Spit

Abright but chilly day saw members and families of the Probus Club of Basingstoke visit the RNLI station at the very end of Calshot Spit on the western side of the Solent. Until it closed in 1961, Calshot Spit had been the site of RAF

Calshot, which was the primary seaplane/flying boat development and training unit in the UK. Hampshire



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Wishing everyone a joyful festive season and a safe and prosperous 2026 from all of us at Basingstoke Concert Band.

This coming year is a very special one, as we celebrate 50 years since the band was formed. We have a full programme of events and concerts planned throughout the year to mark this milestone. Our concert dates are regularly published in this local magazine, so please keep a watchful eye for announcements.

We are especially excited to share that a **50th Anniversary Celebration Concert** will be held at the Haymarket Theatre, Basingstoke on **Sunday 20 September 2026**, where we look forward to welcoming all who have supported or been part of BCB over the years. More details will follow soon.

Thank you, one and all, for your continued support. We look forward to entertaining you – and meeting many of you – in 2026

CC then opened an activity centre on the site where it was regularly asked by HM Coastguard to use its boats to rescue people offshore. Eventually, in 1970, a RNLI lifeboat station was established on the site.

The RNLI operates 238 lifeboat stations around the UK and Ireland and is independent of Coastguard and government so depends on voluntary contributions and legacies to maintain its rescue service. Various all-weather lifeboats have seen service at Calshot over the years but these days Calshot is designated as an Inshore lifeboat station with a responsibility extending from the River Itchen bridge in Southampton, all the way down the Solent to the Isle of Wight.

Calshot is at present equipped with both 'D' and 'B' class lifeboats. The 'D' class lifeboat is considered the work

Local News



horse of the service, having a crew of three, and is primarily used for surfer/swimming incidents as well as assisting in cliff or mud bank rescues. Fitted with a 50 HP outboard engine it can travel at 25 knots.

The much larger 'Atlantic 85' B-class lifeboat is a fast inshore rescue craft, named after the Atlantic



Discovering MacDonald Gill Architect, Artist and Mapmaker

MacDonald 'Max' Gill (1884-1947) was an architect, letterer, mural painter and graphic artist of the first half of the twentieth century, best known for his pioneering pictorial poster maps.



Overshadowed in recent times by his controversial sibling, MacDonald Gill was nevertheless a significant artist of his time.

Drawing chiefly from family archives, Caroline Walker presents this biography of MacDonald Gill telling the story of this complex and talented man.

Join us for this talk on
Wednesday 21 January at 10 a.m.
St Mary's Hall, Overton

Free to members - Non-members £3 on the door



2026 gig dates

24 th JAN	ALICE ARMSTRONG
7 th FEB	JON AMOR TRIO
7 th MAR	GUY TORTORA
25 th APR	BACKBONE BLUES BAND
23 rd MAY	RICHARD CLARKE
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College in South Wales, where it was designed. Having a crew of 3 or 4 it can be deployed in shallow waters as well as handling challenging, open sea conditions. It is equipped with twin 115 hp Yamaha outboard engines reaching a useful 35 knots.

An appreciative Probus Club presented a cheque to thank the Calshot lifeboat staff for a really interesting exposure to the experiences of their voluntary crews. For more information about the activities of the Probus Club of Basingstoke see their web site probusbasingstoke.club or phone their secretary on 07814 937202 for an informal chat.

Paul Flint

Walking



Woodland Wellbeing Walks for January

Come and enjoy scenic walks around our local woods and fields.

2nd, 3rd & 4th Tuesdays

Finishing with a sociable cuppa at the Methodist Chapel

Start Point for Walks:

Tuesday, 13 Jan. at 10 am - Village Pond

B

Tuesday, 20 Jan. at 10 am - St John's Rd lay-by R

Tuesday, 27 Jan. at 10 am - East Oakley Village Hall [aka The Green Hut] B

Other Details:

Start time: 10 am

Pace: gentle

Duration: 1 hour approx

Routes: varied

B = walk led by Barbara [07722 757057]

R = walk led by Richard [07549 021174]



40 minutes' drive of Oakley. Our planned walk dates for January are Wednesday 14, and Sunday 24. If you want to get outside more in 2026 and meet some new people, why not come along and try us out.

Details of all our walks are always published on our website a week before the walk takes place.

Find us on Facebook or visit our website for more information: oakleyramblers.org.

Corrine Thomas



'Cold Moon' over Oakley, 4 December 2025



Oakley Bowling Club News

The Club's AGM saw Diane Yarrall the Ladies Secretary, installed as our President for 2026 - the twelfth time a lady has held this prestigious



Diane and Norman 2026 will see little

change amongst the Officers and Committee though Sue Dixon returns as Ladies Captain - a position she held from 2015 to 2022. Welcomed onto the Committee were Paul Hammond, Peter Pearce and Richard Waters.

Our second indoor friendly of the winter saw the Club achieve a rare and surprisingly comfortable victory, at an indoor club, with one drawing and three winning rinks at the Longmeadow Club in Whitchurch. If this was not a big enough high for outgoing President Ric, at the end of his year of office, the Club then had further success in team competitions with our two teams recording wins over Old Basing and Howard Park in the Ambler/Fuller trophy at Loddon Vale and our Moreton Cup team

position. On a miserably wet evening nearly 50 members turned out for the installation and to hear the Officer's reports on the 2025 season and to consider three Committee proposals, all of which were approved.



beating Newbury at Longmeadow.

November saw 21 members taking part in the annual Bowls Hampshire 5-day tour to the Dorset Bowls resort. For the last three years, Oakley members have won the competition and, although we did not make it four on the trot, Val and John Ryan, playing with Carl and David from Cove finished

runners up, thus ensuring Oakley representation in the last five finals.

Our Friday social evenings continue to be great fun with a fresh theme each week and our short mat bowling, led by Marion and Keith Bringes remains as popular as ever.

There is always something happening at the Club. For information go to www.oakleybc.org.uk. Alternatively, phone Spencer on 01256 780418 or Diane on 01256 781465.

Spencer Kerley

Free Ads



All entries should be sent in writing to Maureen Dallaway, by 10 January 2026 for inclusion in next month's Link. Entries may also be sent by e-mail to freeads@oakleylink.org.uk Please include an address or telephone number.

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Feature



Stand with Care Leavers in Basingstoke

Here in Basingstoke, we meet young people every day who are preparing to leave care at just 18. Many will step into adulthood without the family network, financial safety nets, or emotional support that most of us rely on. Yet, despite this, care leavers under 25 receive a lower rate of Universal Credit than older adults. It is a gap that makes an already difficult transition even harder.

At Step by Step, your local youth homelessness charity, we believe that care leavers deserve fair financial support from the moment they begin living independently. Last year we worked with young people and researchers at the University of Southampton to explore what would truly help care leavers thrive. Together, we identified four essentials: fairer financial support, better access to housing, consistent emotional and practical guidance, and clear information early enough for young people to prepare. These findings have helped shape our campaigning work, which is now gaining attention nationally.

As we push for national change, we're also reaching out to our own community here in Basingstoke. You can offer something no policy ever could: stability, belief, and a safe place for a young person to grow. Many young people simply need a safe home and a trusted adult who believes in them. That is exactly what our Supported Lodgings hosts provide. If you have a spare room and a few hours a week to offer guidance, you could make an extraordinary difference to a young person who is working hard to build a stable future.

We provide full training, ongoing support, and a weekly allowance. You provide the welcome, encouragement, and belief that helps a young person grow in confidence and independence. If you have ever wondered whether you could help someone take their next step forward, now is a meaningful time to explore it. Find out more about becoming a Supported Lodgings host: stepbystep.org.uk/spare-room
Watch the film: stepbystep.org.uk/sbs-in-action/driving-change/18-isnt-cheaper/

Sally Britt

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