

# Supporting the young and promoting volunteering

**Pippa Kirkbride**

High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire 2025-26

As High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire, my year is shaped by two guiding themes: giving young people the best possible start in life and promoting volunteering in all its forms. These priorities have informed my work, from engagement with schools and youth organisations to recognising those who give their time in service to others. These themes sit comfortably alongside my core duties to uphold the constitution, to support the justice system and promote the Office of High Sheriff.

A highlight of my year has been the annual Justice Service for Buckinghamshire, held at St Mary's Church, Amersham. It marked the start of the new judicial year and brought together representatives from across our civic, faith and legal communities. I was honoured to welcome Dwayne Fields, Chief Scout of the UK, whose inspiring address on resilience, volunteering and opportunity for young people perfectly echoed and amplified my themes. His words were a powerful reminder of the difference that belief, encouragement and community can make to a young life and he highlighted the need for volunteers to enable the 100,000 young people waiting to join a scout group to do so.

Giving young people the best possible start has taken many forms across the county. I have visited schools and colleges including Waddesdon School, Wycombe Grammar School and Milton Keynes College, meeting students who are passionate about contributing to their



With (back row) Chief Inspector Simon Lincoln, Dwayne Fields (Chief Scout UK), Jason Hogg (Chief Constable Thames Valley Police), Matt Cumming (Cadet Leader) and (front) Angela O'Connor (Cadet Leader) and Police Cadets Zara Skidmore and Jen Skidmore



Outside St Mary's Church with Squadron Leader Jeremy Davies RAFAC, Nicholas Buxton (Herts), Sean Taylor DL (Berks), The Countess Howe (Lord-Lieutenant), John May CVO OBE DL (Oxon), Stephen Bryan JP (Leics) and Camilla King (Beds)

communities. I was delighted to join the High Sheriff's Fun Day at Woodrow High House, where fifty young people who might not normally access such opportunities enjoyed a day of outdoor challenges and teamwork. I also met Youth Voice Bucks (created by Buckinghamshire Council) and attended events with scouts, guides and police cadets, whose discipline and enthusiasm for service is inspiring.

Promoting volunteering has taken me into every corner of Buckinghamshire. Through the Heart of Bucks 25th Anniversary Tours, I have met extraordinary volunteers supporting charities such as Restore Hope and Vana Trust Farm. These organisations nurture confidence, skills and wellbeing, often changing lives in quiet but profound ways. I have also seen the work of the Youth Enquiry Service (based in High Wycombe) and Hope After Harm, whose volunteers help prevent crisis and support recovery. In Milton Keynes, the Coroners' Courts Support Service, an independent charity staffed by trained volunteers, offers free confidential, emotional support and practical help to bereaved families, witnesses and others attending an inquest. Similarly, UnityMK, whose volunteers provide a wide range of services to those experiencing homelessness.

Celebrating volunteers themselves is vital. The Festival of Young Volunteers at Penn House and the Lord-Lieutenant's garden party were joyful opportunities to



With His Honour Judge Patrick Perusko, His Honour Judge Jonathan Cooper, Regional Tribunal Judge Elizabeth McMahon (and Squadron Leader Jeremy Davies RAFAC  
Photos : Marion Mason Images

recognise the people whose kindness and commitment strengthen our communities. Their stories have also been captured in the Volunteer Voices project, which I am leading in partnership with photographer Christopher James Hall. To date we have collected over 70 stories from volunteers across Buckinghamshire – including those who support the courts and judiciary. Plans are now in place for a digital presentation and public displays later in the year.

Six months into my year, I am continually inspired by the energy and compassion I encounter. Whether through the creativity of our young people or the dedication of our volunteers, Buckinghamshire continues to demonstrate the power of community. It is my privilege as High Sheriff to witness that spirit in action and to shine a light on those who make our county such a remarkable place to live and serve.