

# Collaboration for positive impact

## Karen Lynch MBE

High Sheriff of Warwickshire 2025-26

When I began my year as High Sheriff of Warwickshire, I knew I would have to deliver the role on limited resources and with a very focussed approach. I still needed to work part-time; I would need to do my own admin; and I was determined to show that this historic role can be modern, relevant and impactful, even with my very tight budget. I was conscious that I didn't want this year to be dominated by what I had learnt, but by what could be delivered under my theme of collaboration for positive impact.

That collaboration has taken many forms, not least the early building of my WhatsApp-enabled group, my 'offering of consorts' – friends and supporters on hand to share the driving, the catering and the ushering. Six months in, I feel both exhausted and exhilarated... and proud of what we have managed to achieve together.

Collaboration is something I believe we can all apply in different ways even if it is just a touch of mischief. One of my favourite lighter moments was joining my fellow yellow-clad supporters of the air ambulance service as we celebrated and raised awareness of Air Ambulance Week. That, too, was collaboration – people coming together for a cause that saves lives every day.

My most ambitious project so far – and the one I will never forget – has been the introduction of Warwickshire ChangeMakers, designed to build on the tradition of the High Sheriff's Award. The Warwickshire roll of honour was built collaboratively and included the exemplary individuals from all areas of the High Sheriff's remit: our professionals and also our often unsung heroes of the county,



Award recipient Ian Malins, Chair from Warwickshire Search and Rescue

whether volunteers, community leaders, business innovators or young people, who quietly change lives every day through their actions. I wanted them to all be seen and celebrated in front of their families in a way that would give their work the dignity and recognition it deserves.

From the first pitch to Warwick Castle through to the event itself took just 14 weeks. On 5 August, 500 people gathered. In an investiture-style ceremony at St Mary's, 100 ChangeMakers and their families processed through Warwick town centre in a road closure worthy of a royal occasion, before joining an early evening garden party at Warwick Castle. All 14 of our mayors were represented. It was an extraordinary display of support and collaboration. The cost to me personally? Less than £100 thanks to the combined goodwill and resources of Warwick town. The cost in time? Immense. But the return in connection and impact has been extraordinary. Feedback since has been deeply moving. For many of those recognised, it was the most special day of their lives.

My other great highlight so far has been

the expansion of the Young High Sheriff programme, now operating in each of our three regions simultaneously. This has involved local cadet and police youth teams, schools, councils and the Police and Crime Commissioner, bringing together young people across the county to design and deliver their own crime prevention projects.

One notable outcome has been the development of Project Prevent, created by students in the north of the county to tackle harassment, grooming and assault. They organised school assemblies, produced a website, distributed personal alarms and even ran self-defence training. They weren't just participants, they were leaders. Project Prevent is now being rolled out across Rugby, supported by council funding.

This is exactly what I hoped for: showing that young people are not only the leaders of tomorrow, they are leaders now and we have been able to amplify their voices and help them keep their communities safe.

So my first six months have been defined by collaboration, creativity and connection. I have not approached this role with grandeur or ceremony, but as a normal person trying to make the most of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. My hope is that future High Sheriffs will feel encouraged to do the same: to bring people together, to champion young voices and to leave the county stronger than they found it.



The early evening garden party for ChangeMakers held at Warwick Castle



Left: With 100 Warwickshire ChangeMakers on the steps of Warwick Shire Hall before processing to Warwick Castle