



Summer 2023

SWAN Transport is a volunteer car scheme providing transport for those in B&NES who are older, frail or disabled and on a low income. If you would like a journey or to drive for us, please call: 01761 439548.

Good news here at Swan... We welcome 2 new drivers; Victoria and Liz to our Volunteer Transport Team! Victoria is a young volunteer helping out in Bath and Liz is supporting us in the Somer Valley.

Helen our Young Volunteer Co-ordinator has been doing a wonderful job, as well as bringing Victoria and Liz to our driving team she has also recruited several other young volunteers who are already helping us in different ways. Drushti, Edie, Jody and Johnny have been supporting our Cuppa and Chat coffee morning, plus helping with various jobs at the Swan Office. We are so grateful to Helen and everyone volunteering for us for all the good work they've been getting up to!



Volunteers Week: Volunteer Interview

Swan's Young Volunteer Co-Ordinator Helen Allen has recently interviewed one of our new Volunteers Drushti about her personal experience of helping out by supporting passengers at our social events and Cuppa and Chat:

Drushti is a 22-year-old international student from Mumbai studying at the University of Bath. Coming to the UK without her family and navigating University life alone has been daunting and Drushti often felt out of place and isolated. Although a lover of small towns, Drushti longs to visit many places while she is in the UK. Drushti identified that she wanted to 'help out while she is here.' She found Swan on the call for volunteers on her University website. On her first day of volunteering at Swan, Drushti reported, 'I loved it! Best Saturday since I have been here. Everyone was so friendly and welcoming.' She has lots of ideas about future events 'We all need something to look forward to.'

Drushti was helpful and pleasant- serving hot drinks, collecting sandwiches and chatting to passengers. She also had the idea of taking Polaroids of the passengers on the day everyone went on a treat. Many of Swan's passengers have friends at organised events whom they met through the charity and whom they rarely see, so the photos were beautiful memories from the day.

Drushti shares her experience as a Community Transport Volunteer:

What did you think of community transport prior to joining Swan?

Prior to reading about SWAN on the University of Bath website, I wasn't very familiar with community transportation. I've been a volunteer for a few months and can now see why community transport is an important part of our society. It is very helpful for elderly people and individuals with mobility challenges. It makes a big difference in the lives of people and it becomes one of the things that keeps them going.

What do you think are the barriers for young people in volunteering in community transport roles?

I would say that not many people are aware of community transport; this may also be due to time constraints. To reach out to more people and raise awareness, social media and websites will be the key targets. People would have the opportunity to learn more about the organisation, the cause it is working towards, and how volunteering in any capacity could make a difference.

What would you say are the benefits for volunteers and isolated people through community transport and events?

Personally speaking the last event I attended was one of the best memories I have made since I have come to the U.K. I look forward to working together with everyone at SWAN and help in organising events for all the passengers. It is very rewarding for both the parties, getting to know people and sharing stories, it becomes a special moment that they both will always treasure.

Could a community transport or car scheme be useful for young people / students?

I'm not sure, if it will be very useful for young people at the moment but that's something to think about. Although, young people with mental health issues or mobility issues can benefit from this and even monthly events for them can help them enjoy their time together.

Can you say anything about the impact volunteering has on your own wellbeing feelings of isolation or connection.

It has helped me a lot, it is so fulfilling, and I recommend it to everyone. It gives you purpose and adds so much meaning. Growing up can be difficult but getting to know perspectives and wisdom from older people truly helps. They don't have much to look forward to everyday so even for them life at that age can be tough so coming together and being there for each other is so beautiful. It's human and at the end of the day that's what we live for, meaningful connections and being there. Through SWAN I get to do this and to be a part of the organisation is one of the best decisions I have made.

SWAN is a small community transport charity in B&NES. Our volunteers are the heartbeat of the organisation, and "our volunteer drivers have a direct impact on tackling loneliness in our community; providing a lifeline to isolated people offering a listening ear and always going the extra mile." Since September we have been working to engage young people in our charity and we are so proud of how our new young volunteers have embraced their roles; from becoming part of our team of drivers, helping organise and host social gatherings, office work and creating bespoke music playlists (with all the favourite tunes of our passengers) to enjoy at our events. Loneliness and isolation is affecting our younger generation more than ever, we know that loneliness impacts physical and mental health. Volunteering can have a powerful and positive impact on well-being and feeling more connected.

Helen Allen, Young Volunteer Project Coordinator.



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