

As His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant for the County of Derbyshire, it is an enormous privilege to welcome you all to this Service *All Shall Be Well: A Celebration of Volunteers, Trustees and Community*.

Those simple but deeply powerful words *All shall be well* written by Julian of Norwich in about 1373 have brought hope and comfort for hundreds of years, and capture the spirit of why we are here today. They speak of faith, compassion and resilience and remind us that even in challenging times, communities are strengthened when people come together in service to one another.

Today we celebrate the voluntary and community sector and acknowledge the **extraordinary** contribution that volunteers, trustees and community leaders make to the life of our city and county.

The many organisations represented here today are fundamental to that role. They are the glue which strengthens the stability of our society meeting human needs, upholding dignity and rights, enriching lives, and enabling others to flourish, to succeed, and to achieve their potential.

As I travel across our city and county I am honestly in awe and constantly uplifted by the work of volunteers. I see endless examples of motivated compassionate people showing selfless commitment and dedicated service to others and I see the **profound difference they** make every single day.

Across our towns and villages, in community centres and church halls, food banks and our courts, in uniformed youth organisations, in groups helping young people find confidence and purpose, those protecting the environment, delivering first aid, supporting our veterans, preserving our heritage, promoting the arts, and in countless other settings, there are thousands of people working tirelessly, quietly, making life better for others.

You represent the best of Derbyshire.

What humbles me most is the obvious, that volunteering is given freely. You give your time, hours that could be spent elsewhere. You give your skills and knowledge. You give your lived experience. You give your patience. And above all, you give your passion, the quiet but powerful determination to effect change.

Volunteering is rarely about recognition. Much of what you do happens behind the scenes, often unnoticed by the wider world. Yet the impact of your work is felt, in the comfort of someone who no longer feels alone, in the confidence of a young person who discovers their potential, in the reassurance of a family who knows help is there when they need it. We think particularly today of all **those young people not in education, work or training, the help of so many organisations is essential if their lives are to be turned around.**

Volunteers bring warmth into cold moments. You offer reassurance in times of uncertainty. You create opportunity where there might otherwise be limitation. You build bridges between communities and you strengthen neighbourhoods. And you remind us that kindness is not an occasional act, it is a way of life, and you help **others believe** that even in difficult times,, **all shall indeed be well.**

We also recognise today the invaluable contribution of **trustees**, whose wisdom, financial stewardship, sense of responsibility and dedication sustain so many organisations through increasingly challenging times. Your leadership provides the strong foundations upon which so much vital work is built.

Volunteers themselves often say they receive much in return: new skills, new friendships, and a renewed sense of purpose. We know that volunteering improves physical and mental wellbeing and helps create communities that are more cohesive, caring and engaged, communities **are stronger** because people choose to support one another.

His Majesty The King has long championed the importance of volunteering. One of the key priorities guiding his work is the strengthening of local communities and support for civil society. That

commitment was reflected so powerfully in the inauguration of *The Big Help Out* following the Coronation in 2023 an initiative created to showcase the power of volunteering and inspire people across the nation to become involved in service to others.

In his message marking the launch of His Majesty said:

I have long believed that one of the greatest strengths of our nation is our ability to come together and help each other through times of hardship. Throughout my life I have been encouraged and inspired by those selfless volunteers who dedicate their time and talents to helping others, across all communities and across the full breadth of our country.”

Those words speak directly to **all of you gathered** here today.

What you do is extraordinary , despite so many challenges , the pandemic, the cost of living crisis, reduced funding, and a growing demand for services, you continue to innovate, to persevere, and to serve. Your resilience is deeply inspiring.

So to the volunteers, trustees, organisers, fundraisers, and all those working faithfully behind the scenes: **thank you.**

I truly believe in the power of people to effect positive change in our society, you are enhancing lives and shaping a stronger and more compassionate future for our City and County, and today we celebrate **the remarkable spirit of service** that exists throughout Derbyshire.

May you **know** how valued you are, how deeply appreciated **your** contribution is, and how **profoundly your work matters**, and may you leave today encouraged by the knowledge that through community, compassion and service to others, **all shall be well.**