



## Trustees' Annual Report Year Ending December 2025



**Registered Charity No: 1171678**

**Patron: Noreen Kershaw**

**© 2026 Breast Mates**

## **Primary Objectives of the Charity as set out in the constitution**

“To provide relief and support for people diagnosed with breast cancer and to further advance public awareness and education on the subject of breast cancer.”

## **Annual General Meeting**

The AGM was held on 24 September 2025, at the Robert Foulkes Centre, Whiston, and was attended by 24 members.

## **Breast Mates Trustees**

**Avril Ainsbury**



**Tracey Carmichael**



**Shelagh Hill**



**Eileen McGovern**



**Julie Morgan**



**Donna Steele**





## Legal Structure and Governance

The Charity is governed by its Constitution which is reviewed annually and revised, if necessary, in line with the Charity Commission's guidance and approval.

The Charity is incorporated through legal status of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), which means that if the CIO is wound up, the Trustees of the CIO have no liability to contribute to its assets and no personal responsibility for settling its debts and liabilities.

No serious incident or other matter that Trustees need to report to the Charity Commission, has occurred during this reporting period.

The Charity will continue to purchase Public Liability insurance.

At every Annual General Meeting (AGM), one third of the Charity's Trustees shall retire from office. The vacancies arising may be filled by the decision of the members at the AGM. If the vacancies are not filled, the Trustees may at any time decide to appoint a new charity trustee.

The Charity is administered by a committee of up to nine Trustees, who meet on a monthly or bi-monthly basis, as required. Donna Steele was newly-appointed as a Trustee in 2025.





## Principal Aims and Activities

The Breast Mates Cancer Support Group is a non-medical self-help group, run by local people; most of our trustees and volunteers have had breast cancer and understand the affect a diagnosis can have on individuals and the knock-on effect this has on their family members and friends. Membership of the Group is free.

The Group provides support to those members who have received a primary cancer diagnosis, and who have undergone or are receiving ongoing treatment. Breast Mates also support those members who have received a secondary cancer diagnosis and who may require additional support.

Both groups are intrinsically linked and have access to resources and support from Oncology Consultants and other health care professionals, based across local health authorities; as well as a range of guest speakers who are invited to attend the Group's meetings.

The membership for the year ending December 2025 totalled 115.



**Weekly 'Walk and Talk',  
Robert Foulkes Centre 2025**

**Secondary Members Group meeting held at the Cedarwood Centre at Willowbrook Hospice**



## What We Do

### Breast Mates provides:

- **Practical and emotional support** - through one-to-one chats between volunteers and members needing non-medical advice and assistance, or sometimes just a listening ear. All conversations between individuals and volunteers are conducted on a basis of trust and absolute guarantee of confidentiality.
- **A telephone help line** - for those members who require individual help and advice and onward referral when necessary.
- **A WhatsApp Chat Group** - for sharing information and chat with fellow members.
- **Physical exercise and dance programmes** - delivered through the Group's weekly **Walk & Talk** get togethers (held at the Robert Foulkes Centre every Tuesday afternoon) and tutorial **Dance Fit** (held at Whiston Town Hall every Monday evening). Both programmes are extremely well attended.
- **Gardening** - at the Group's allotment on Molyneux Drive, Prescott, for those green-fingered members of the Group, who can enjoy the calm surroundings of the great outdoors, relax and interact with other gardeners and community groups on the plot. Donna Steele, a Trustee member of the Group, is the lead on this project.
- **Well-being Events** - when experts join the membership for relaxation therapy sessions; self-awareness; gardening advice; musical activities and many more.
- **Publicity Events** - which provide the opportunity for members and volunteers to promote breast cancer awareness and to engage with the general public; achieved through screening events across various community venues, including GP surgeries; Job Centres; to name but a few.
- **Social and Cultural Events** - offering members the opportunity to broaden their interests in cultural outings to the theatre; museums, and music events.

***So how do we deliver our aims,  
services and activities?***



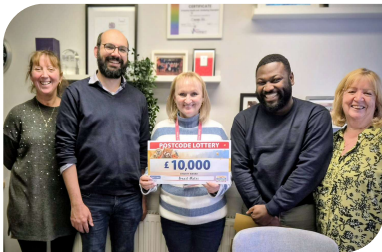
## Funding and Finances

The Charity is pro-active in sourcing funding for the benefit of the Group and its members. 2025 proved to be a very successful year in that the Group was delighted to receive funding from the National Lottery Community Fund and the Postcode Community Fund.

The amount received from the National Lottery Community Fund, amounting to £20,000, was one of the biggest donations ever received by the Group and will be used to support the Group over the next 2 years to provide physical and well-being programmes for its members.



Breast Mates charity is based in the same catchment area as the winners of the September 2025 'Millionaire Street' Peoples' Postcode Lottery. As a consequence, the charity was selected as a standout, well-run charity and was awarded £10,000 by the Postcode Community Trust.



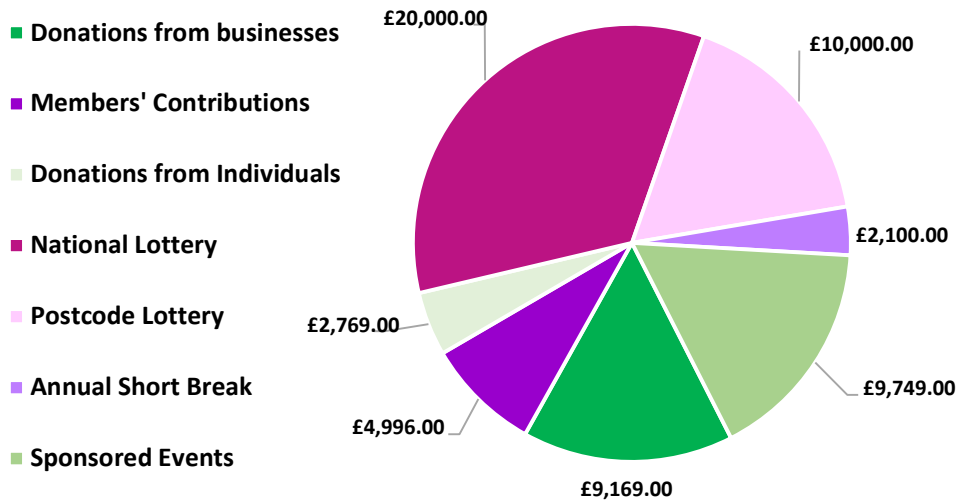
For the second-year running, there was an increase in support from local businesses, compared to the previous year. Particular mention goes to '**Want That Dress**' who organised a fashion show, the proceeds from which were donated to the Group. **Deborah Bennett Funeral Directors** has been a regular and generous donator to the Group over many years with the money donated funding the Group's weekly Walk & Talk sessions. **Shirley Downey, Ladies Captain at Lee Park Golf Club**, also donated a substantial amount to the Group.

Personal donations and sponsorships continued to contribute to the Group's success.

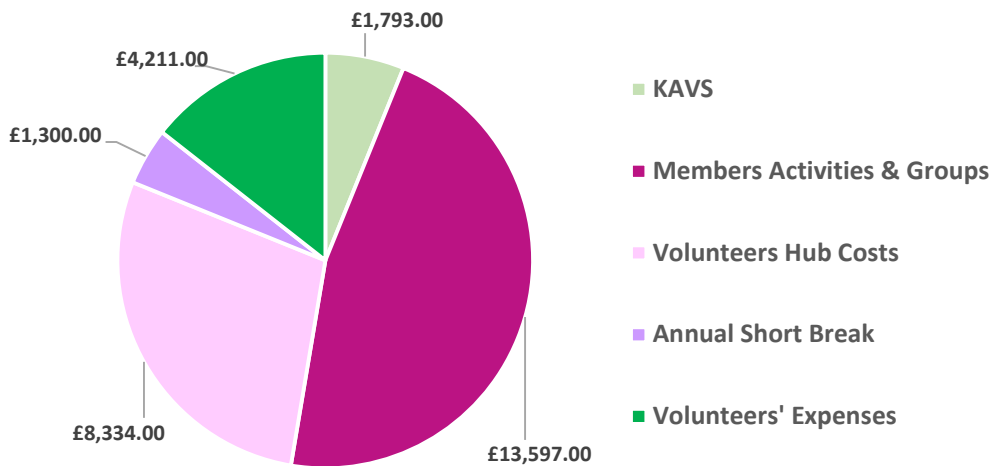
The Group also introduced a 50:50 Club which is a type of monthly lottery, where participants buy a number and 50% of the funds raised goes to the winner, with the remaining 50% going into the Breast Mates coffers. The amount the winner receives depends on how many numbers are sold. The first lucky winner was drawn on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

For the year-ending 2025, the following charts detail the principal sources of income acquired from the many individuals and organisations who continue to support the Charity; and the expenditure costs of the Group.

Income - Total £58,783.00



Expenditure - Total £29,235.00



## At a Glance

9,360 hours volunteered

12 promotional events in the Community

53 home visits to members made

10 hospital visits to members made

12 Trustees' meetings

Over 100 support sessions per annum

31 sponsored events

23 donations from local businesses

23 donations from individuals

116 Members' contributions

23 Annual Short Break contributions

(Detailed accounts are available on request from Breast Mates)

## Year in Review 2025

Back in November 2024, Breast Mates were honoured and excited to announce that the Charity had received the Kings Award for Voluntary Services (KAVS). This award is The MBE for volunteer groups. It is the highest award given to local voluntary groups in the UK, and is bestowed at the behest of His Majesty King Charles III, on his birthday.



The award was presented to the Group by His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Merseyside **Mr Mark F W Blundell**, at an Award Ceremony, held on Tuesday, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2025 at Prescot Town Hall.

Other dignitaries in the **Lord-Lieutenancy Party** were: Deputy Lieutenants - Jayne Hauxwell DL; and Lesley Martin-Wright JP DL; Clerk of the Lieutenancy - Helen Tanzey

Dignitaries in the **Knowsley Civic Party** were: The Mayor of Knowsley, Cllr Ken McGlashan; Consort Ms. Ann McGlashan; and Leader of Knowsley Council Cllr Graham Morgan.

*"In May 2025, in recognition of Breast Mates receiving the Kings Award for Voluntary Services, I was lucky enough to attend the Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace with Breast Mates volunteer and Chair, Julie Morgan. The day was amazing from start to finish. We were taken by Royal Buggy to the lawn at the rear of the Palace where afternoon tea was served in elegant marquees, along with music from the military band.*

*The Royal Party which included the Prince and Princess of Wales; the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh; and Zara Tindall, greeted guests on the lawn. Julie and I were fortunate enough to have a long conversation with Zara Tindall about the work that Breast Mates does within the community to raise breast cancer awareness; and the support the Group provides to women living with breast cancer and to those dealing with the after-effects of treatment.*

*A day both Julie and I will never forget and truly an honour to have been chosen to represent the charity."*

*Words from Carolyn Hanley*



## Events 2025 – Working in the Community

One of the Group's key objectives is to work alongside other community groups and professionals to promote cancer awareness, screening programmes and resources available to those who have received a cancer diagnosis. The importance of early detection should not be underestimated - early detection saves lives!

Members of the Group were 'out and about' across the Knowsley Region in Autumn 2025.

On 14<sup>th</sup> October, members of the Breast Mates Primary and Secondary groups, visited Livv Housing, to promote breast screening awareness; attendees shared their experiences and highlighted the need and importance of early intervention and detection. This event was scheduled to coincide with Breast Cancer Awareness month.



Members also distributed posters to shopkeepers in Huyton Village to coincide with the arrival of the Mobile Mammogram Unit; set up a stand in Huyton Bingo Foyer and packed bags at a fundraising day at The Range in Prescot in the lead up to Christmas.

The Group would like to thank local businesses for assisting with our work in the community.



## Events 2025

Members enjoyed a range of activities and events throughout 2025, some of which were held at the Robert Foulkes Centre in Prescot, during the Group's weekly Walk and Talk sessions. Other events were held at other venues across the region. Here are just some of the highlights.

Group members love nothing more than dining out at restaurants within the local area. Once again, the Group visited **Maturo's** and **The Grapes**.

On 5<sup>th</sup> November, the Group chose to visit **Sing Ping** in Prescot, instead of fireworks. One member recalls 'the food was amazing and in the company of the **Breast Mates** family, it was a memorable evening'.



### Afternoon Tea Events

Debra Hill, one of the Group's volunteers, helped organise two **Afternoon Tea** events – the first working in association with **Park Farm Community Centre** and the second in association with Cath Brooks at the **Derbyshire Hill Family Centre** in St Helens. Both events were held as fundraisers for Breast Mates and to promote the work of the Group in the community.



### 24<sup>th</sup> June 2025 – Amanda Dumphy, Macmillan Nurse

Based at St Helens Hospital and working alongside the Lilac Centre and the Burney Breast Unit, Amanda joined the Group, to seek the advice from members on how the Macmillan support office could improve its services to patients going through treatment. Amanda outlined the services currently available and during a very useful two-way discussion, took onboard suggestions made by Group members.

### 1<sup>st</sup> July 2025 - Jane Mullarkey, Project Lead Macmillan Cancer Champions

Jane joined the Group to inform members of the exercise classes available for those recovering from illness, accessible via the Well-Being programme. The afternoon also included a seated exercise demonstration, which members were encouraged to participate in.

## Events 2025

### 1<sup>st</sup> August 2025 – Bury Market

Breast Mates took to the road for a visit to the beautiful town of Bury to visit the market and surrounding shops within the town.



### 5<sup>th</sup> August 2025 - Better Together

Thirty-two members attended a day facilitated by Jackie Meadows, during which members and volunteers took part in interactive team building exercises and discussion.

The event was organised by 'Capacity for Change'.



### 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2025 – Out and about in Birkenhead Park

Sixteen members boarded the train (under the Mersey), for a walk around the historic and scenic Birkenhead Park.

Lunch was subsidised by the Group which was held at the Visitors Centre in the park.



## Events 2025

### 30<sup>th</sup> September 2025 – ‘An Audience With Jimmy McGovern’

Thirty-one members attended the eagerly anticipated ‘Audience With’ afternoon and were delighted to welcome the award-winning screenwriter and producer **Jimmy McGovern** together with the Group’s Patron **Noreen Kershaw**.



Noreen, who adopted the role of ‘Interviewer’, explained that she had first met Jimmy back in the early 1980s, when they were both working on **Brookside**. They had since collaborated on projects including **Broken (2017)** one episode of which included members of the Breast Mates Group.

Jimmy gave a detailed insight into why he became a writer, his inspiration coming after entering and winning a writing competition at school. Encouraged by questions from the members, Jimmy explained why his style focuses, in the main, on difficult social issues, none more so than **Cracker (1993)**, **Priest (1994)**, **Hillsborough (1996)** and the most recently acclaimed **Unforgivable (2025)**.

It’s fair to say that the afternoon was a great success and very much welcomed by the members.

### 11<sup>th</sup> November 2025 – Rhythm Reaction Community Interest Company



Steve Shotton joined the Group to demonstrate how drumming can have many positive effects on well-being; enhance confidence in taking part in a group activity; improve muscle memory and co-ordination skills; and last but not least have fun!



## Events 2025

Two Christmas events were held during the month of December – **Christmas Lunch** on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2025, when a delicious lunch was enjoyed by both Primary and Secondary members of the Group. Entertainment was provided by **Fast Eddie** and our own songstress **Sue Hall**. The Group's **Christmas Party** was held on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2025 at The Park in Huyton, with live music from vocalist **Sophie Marie**.

## Events 2025 – Secondary Group

Members of the Secondary Group also enjoyed a range of activities and events throughout 2025, which were held at the Cedarwood Centre at Willowbrook Hospice and others at venues throughout the region. Detailed below are just some of the Guest Speaker events held throughout 2025.

**3<sup>rd</sup> April 2025** – Deborah Ellis, Future Care Planning Clinical Nurse Specialist, Merseyside and West Lancashire Hospitals.

**1<sup>st</sup> May 2025** – Carley Smith, Health Promotion Trainer at Merseycare.

**3<sup>rd</sup> July 2025** – Dr Dan Monnery, Consultant in Palliative Care, Liverpool Clatterbridge.

One very powerful message from Dan that came out of the session was that:

***“Peer support is so important when faced with a cancer diagnosis. The people around you want to help, but won’t know what to say or what you are going through. Meeting people who already know what you are going through helps to ensure you have support from people who really understand and can guide you based on their own experience. Make sure you find your people”.***



**4<sup>th</sup> September 2025** – Phil Walker, Metastatic Breast Cancer Clinical Nurse Specialist, Liverpool Clatterbridge.

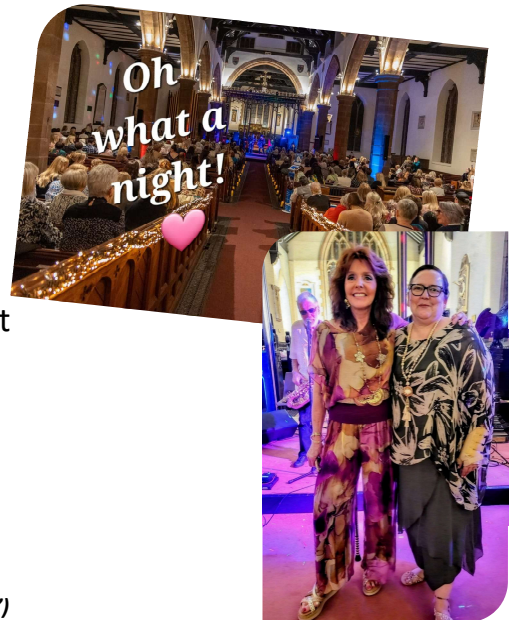
**6<sup>th</sup> November 2025** – Debbie Johnston, Counsellor Co-Ordinator, The Lilac Centre, St Helens Hospital.

## Events 2025 – Fundraisers

### 20<sup>th</sup> March 2025 – ‘Want That Dress’ Grand Charity Fashion Show

Two of our members – Jan Bowen and Donna Steele – were delighted to be invited to take part in this event organised by **Jane at ‘Want That Dress’** as a fundraiser for Breast Mates. The event, held at Prescott Parish Church, provided the perfect catwalk for an evening of fashion, music and more. Approximately 250 people attended the event which raised a staggering £4,700 which Jane kindly donated to Breast Mates.

*(‘Oh what a night’ image reproduced with the kind permission of ‘Want That Dress’)*



### 10th October 2025 – Breast Mates Autumn Fundraiser

Eighty-five people **Banded Together for Breast Mates**, at St Aiden’s Club in Huyton. The event was held to coincide with breast cancer awareness month, and featured live music from **The Whisky Sours**.

It was an evening of music, dancing, raffles, tombola, and refreshments. Everyone enjoyed themselves and the event raised £2,039 with all proceeds going to Breast Mates. The Group’s thanks go to the members who organised the event, the venue St Aiden’s, Huyton, and **The Whisky Sours** for making it such a memorable evening.

Event organisers taking a well-deserved bow



## Spotlight On .....

The success of the Breast Mates Cancer Support Group is very much dependent on the unfailing work of the Trustees and volunteers (and their family members), who work tirelessly to deliver the charity's aims and objectives. They give their time for free and their reward is seeing the charity grow, which means the Group can deliver more help to those members who need it.

One of the key objectives of the Group in 2025 was to encourage members to help volunteers on specific projects run throughout the year. A number of members did volunteer their time and skills, but two members volunteered to tell us their stories that led them to 'stepping-out' of their comfort zones to help the Group.

### ..... Donna Steele (in her own words)

*"Hi, I'm known in the Group as Donna. I became a member of Breast Mates Cancer Support Group in November 2021. I was diagnosed in March 2021, but it took me from June to November of that year to summon up the nerve to join the Group. I was so self-conscious of my appearance and I had lost my confidence to be around people, especially because my diagnosis had happened during Covid.*



*I have one adult son who has been so supportive throughout my treatment. I have a partner Matt, but he found it very difficult to cope with what was happening to me – but he was still there for me when I needed him.*

*After joining the Group I threw myself into the numerous activities and opportunities on offer. I took part in the fundraising Fashion Show in 2024; attended weekly dance and walk and talk sessions; daytime excursions and evening events to the theatre and numerous dining-out events. One of the projects that I was keen to work on was the Breast Mates allotment and I found myself leading the project – so worthwhile and rewarding.*

*All of this has helped me to become the person I am today. I remember that at the Fashion Show, one of the volunteers commented that she was proud of me and that 'You were like a butterfly'. This meant so much to me because, I love butterflies, and it made me feel good about myself doing something that had taken me out of my comfort zone.*

Continued .....

## Spotlight On .....

I returned to work but in a new role as a Receptionist. It's fair to say that my involvement with people at Breast Mates, enabled me to build up my confidence to take on this new role at work, which involves interacting with people I had never met.

I had always been wary about volunteering within the Group – it was always in the back of my mind, but just not the right time. That was until I attended a meeting with one of the existing Trustees, who felt that I could take on the role as a Trustee looking after the social media platforms of the Group. The value of doing this is to promote and sign-post people to seek help and encourage well-being. So, I took a leap of faith and became a Trustee in 2025. I would encourage others to get involved and to pass on their skills to help Breast Mates to be the best it can be. Thank you to everyone who has got me to where I am now!"



### ..... Julie Serjeant (in her own words)

"I joined Breast Mates on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2022, and it's been quite a journey since. I was still undergoing treatment when I was diagnosed with a second tumour and it's fair to say that at that time when I joined the Group, I wasn't in a good place either physically or mentally.

I was desperately looking for support as I didn't want the burden of my diagnosis and the issues I was facing, to fall on my family. I'd heard about Breast Mates and the support they offer, but in all honesty, I didn't know if it would be right for me. I was so full of self-doubt. I knew that I needed to feel part of a group, but still I wasn't sure if I could cope leaving the house and my family; albeit only for a couple of hours a week.

If it hadn't been for one of the volunteers literally picking me up from home to take me to the afternoon Walk and Talk sessions, I doubt I would have had the courage or physical strength to make the effort. The support I had from the volunteers was immeasurable.

Continued .....



## Spotlight On .....

I was looking and hoping that by joining the Group I would meet people who had gone through similar experiences, and that I would find answers to the many questions going through my head. It was only my own insecurities that made it a little difficult to integrate into the Group; I was withdrawn and didn't have the confidence to speak up during discussions. But due to the kindness and warmth shown by people around me, my confidence began to grow – I was allowed to do what I felt comfortable with, at my own pace and, most importantly, be myself – no-one was judging me.

Slowly but surely, I reached a stage where I felt I wanted to give something back to the Group.

A lot of what the volunteers do behind the scenes goes unnoticed. So, when the volunteers were asking for members to give their input and time into specific projects, I raised my head above the water and offered my services.

To say I felt like a duck out of water and completely out of my comfort zone, would be an understatement. But with the help and encouragement of other members who had also offered their services, I am now working with a team to deliver projects that will come to fruition in 2026.

The transformation from the person I was back in 2022 hasn't gone unnoticed by my family and friends outside the Group. Receiving a cancer diagnosis doesn't end when your treatment does, it's a long journey that is still ongoing. But with the connections, friendship, love and support I have received from everyone in the Group, I'm sure I will get there.

I regard Breast Mates as my second family – on occasions we cry together, but on the whole the Group is filled with positivity and laughter – what more could you ask for.”

**The Trustees would like to thank Donna and Julie for sharing their very personal stories and providing an insight into how the Group has helped them.**



## Message from the Chair – Julie Morgan

“Wow what a year 2025 has proven to be. Breast Mates received the Kings Award for Voluntary Services at a ceremony held in March 2025, and myself and Carolyn Hanley were privileged to be chosen by the trustees and volunteers to accept the invitation to attend a garden party at Buckingham Palace held on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2025. A day that will live long in our memories.

The Group was also successful in receiving funding from the National Lottery Community Fund, and the Postcode Community Trust – money that will finance many of the initiatives we have planned for 2026.

Our group of volunteers would also like to thank our members for their continued support and, in particular, the ladies who have helped us with our workload.

Thanks also go to Neil McDonald who has acted as the Group's Independent Examiner since 2018. He is replaced by Esther Speksnijder who has taken over this role.

As always, our work will continue with the support and help of the many individuals; local community groups; fundraisers; educational organisations; medical experts; all of whom offer their time, expertise, financial generosity and goodwill to Breast Mates. Together we can continue to make a difference. On behalf of everyone involved with Breast Mates ....

# THANK YOU!!

Trustees have declared their approval of the Trustees' Report.

Signed:

**Shelagh Hill**

Secretary

## How to Find Us

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**The King's Award  
for Voluntary Service**