

# History of DVC

In late 1986 a former manager at the Citizens Advice Bureau and several health workers, including a social worker and an occupational therapist, realized that there was a need for voluntary help in Didcot and the surrounding villages. It was decided to set up a centre which would put people who needed help in touch with those who could offer help. A steering committee was set up and an organiser and a deputy organiser were appointed. We received donations from local businesses and the Army camp and a grant from the Didcot Town Council.

We moved into our office in June 1987. We shared a hut next to the old Citizens Advice Bureau with the venture scouts. It was a tiny brick building with benches around the walls and may have been use as a council rent office at one time. We had a folding table, a borrowed chair, a telephone, a loose leaf file and a card index box. The last three had to be stored in a suitcase overnight in the CAB. It sufficed in the summer but was freezing in the winter despite the use of an oil heater. So in 1989, when we were offered the use of a small room in the Methodist Church, we were delighted. It was in a central situation and was perfect for our needs. We are very grateful to the church for allowing us to continue to rent the room.

Initially we undertook a variety of volunteering tasks, small DIY jobs, visiting, collecting shopping, gardening and driving. For example in the early days one volunteer used to go and play scrabble with a housebound lady, another accompanied a man for a walk to help him get some exercise, another did weekly shopping for a client and others did some gardening. However the greatest demand was for transport and in recent years we have become totally involved with driving to the doctor's surgeries, Oxford and Reading hospitals, treatment centres, shops and hairdressers.

To give some idea of numbers, in the first year we did around 100 jobs a year and had half a dozen volunteers. In 1993 we undertook 508 return drives, had 55 clients and 21 volunteers (these include drivers, office workers and committee members). In 1999 we did 1,149 drives, with 49 clients and 25 volunteers. In 2006 the number of return drives had increased to 1,575.

In 2014 we did 3437 single journeys and registered 400 clients and 35 volunteers.

The number of requests we received necessitated a more efficient recording system and in 2000 we obtained our first computer with the aid of the Millennium Fund. Now we are fully computerised thanks to our dedicated volunteers and generous funders.