

Welcome to the SAVTE Volunteer Newsletter!

We're excited to share the latest news, stories, and updates from across the SAVTE community. In this edition, you'll find inspiring learner and volunteer stories, highlights from our AGM, upcoming events and workshops, important updates on travel claims, and much more. It's a chance to celebrate achievements, stay connected, and see the many ways SAVTE continues to support learners and volunteers across Sheffield.

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES

- **Thursday 26th March**
Reading & Writing - Volunteer Workshop
- **Wednesday 15th April**
1-1 Volunteers "Getting Together" event.

Your Newsletter, Your Say!

What would you like to see in the newsletter? Please tell us what you think using [this survey](#). Thanks!

SAVTE Solidarity: Standing Together

At SAVTE, we continue to support our learners and the Sheffield community, ensuring everyone feels welcomed, valued, and heard. English language skills help build connections, confidence, and understanding, and our volunteers play a vital role in making this possible.

In this spirit, we are sharing again a poem created by our learners a piece we shared previously but which continues to resonate. It reminds us all that we are not strangers, and that our shared experiences, hopes, and voices make our community stronger.

We are not strangers.

'Here we have found a safe place, we respect each other and we have made friends. When I came to the U.K. I was very scared, now that fear is gone.' Gulala, Kurdistan

We are not strangers.

'We came here to be safe, to build a life with our families. 'Here safety... no war.' Frmesk, Kurdistan

We are not strangers.

Children are taught about 'stranger danger!' But is this us? 'All people: Hi... hello!' Radhika, Nepal

We are not strangers.

We have shared our food and our culture. We have given you our care. We have shown you how to 'look through the eyes' of another person. Gaye, Turkey

We are not strangers.

AGM Recap: Celebrating Together!

Our recent Annual General Meeting was a wonderful opportunity for volunteers, learners, trustees, and staff to come together, reflect on the past year, and celebrate the impact of SAVTE.

The meeting began with a warm welcome from **Nuhu**, our link worker, who encouraged attendees to connect with one another and reflect on their personal journeys with SAVTE. He invited everyone to answer questions such as what connects them to SAVTE and their favourite places in Sheffield, creating a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. This opening activity helped bring people together and highlighted the diverse experiences and shared sense of belonging within our community.

This was followed by **Mandy**, one of our co-chairs of trustees, who presented SAVTE's Impact Report. She highlighted the organisation's achievements over the past year, celebrating the progress made and the difference SAVTE continues to make in the lives of learners and volunteers.

Danny, one of our trustees, then presented the Annual Accounts for the year ended 31st July 2025, providing an overview of SAVTE's financial position and ensuring transparency in how resources are managed to support our work.



Nuhu



Mandy



Danny





Aaishah

Aaishah, our other co-chair of trustees, shared her personal journey with SAVTE starting as a volunteer supporting a conversation group, then becoming a trustee. She spoke about how SAVTE helps the community and encouraged other volunteers to consider becoming trustees themselves.



Jo

Next, **Jo**, our CEO, spoke about how SAVTE is part of a wider ecosystem of support in Sheffield. She shared reflections on the organisation's challenges, as well as its aims and priorities for the future, highlighting SAVTE's ongoing commitment to supporting communities and creating meaningful opportunities for learning and connection.



Gita

One of the most inspiring moments of our AGM was hearing directly from our learners and volunteers. Their personal stories showcased the meaningful impact of SAVTE on both individuals and the wider community.

We were especially moved by **Gita**, one of our volunteers, who shared her journey with SAVTE through a heartfelt video. **Lynwen** also delighted us with her story, bringing laughter and warmth with her wonderful sense of humor.



Lynwen

Our learners **Gopika** and **Rondik** shared how SAVTE has helped them gain confidence and become active participants in their communities.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to Gita, Lynwen, Gopika, and Rondik for sharing their experiences and inspiring everyone at the AGM.



Grace & Gaye



Gopika & Rondik



Hazel

The meeting concluded with **Grace**, one of our volunteers, and **Gaye**, one of our learners, reading the poem “We Are Not Strangers,” leaving everyone with a powerful sense of unity, belonging, and shared purpose.



Memorable snapshots from the AGM



To close the AGM, **Hazel**, our lead tutor & quality manager, invited attendees to share their feedback and reflections. Your kind words, encouragement, and appreciation were truly inspiring and reminded us how valued and meaningful SAVTE's work is to so many people.



Thank you to everyone who attended, contributed, and continues to support SAVTE. Your dedication, stories, and energy are what make this community so special, and we look forward to another year of learning, growth, and connection together.



Your stories

From Isolation to Opportunity- Nessar's story

Nessar, originally from Yemen, was introduced to his SAVTE volunteer, Trevor, in the summer of 2024. Newly settled in Sheffield and living near the city centre, Nessar spoke a little English but lacked confidence and felt socially isolated.

He was determined to improve his English and build a life in the UK so he could support his family.

Trevor and Nessar quickly formed a close friendship, and Nessar often expresses his gratitude for Trevor's support.



The family enjoying a trip to the seaside

In spring 2025, Nessar's family joined him in Sheffield. The family has settled well, and the children have adjusted to school and nursery. The whole family has been supported through English sessions, games, and storytelling.

Nessar now hopes to join a SAVTE Conversation Group and aims to attend an ESOL class in 2026. Plans are also underway to match a female volunteer with his wife, Haifa, to help her build a life in Sheffield alongside her family.

Learning, Living, Belonging - Najwa's story

When Linda Baxter met Najwa in February, she found a young Sudanese mother in Sheffield who knew only the English alphabet and numbers. Isolated at home with her son Mohammed, Najwa felt lost in a new world.

Linda didn't just teach English she taught life. From using the Lidl app and joining the library to preparing for the Life in the UK test, she made learning practical and inclusive, even bringing materials for little Mohammed.

The result? Najwa passed her citizenship test, shops independently, attends English classes, and explores Sheffield's parks with confidence.

Najwa says

When Linda came, she made me feel happy, as if she is family... now I feel it is easy

From “just sitting home” to embracing her new community this is what happens when a volunteer sees beyond language barriers to the person within.

Thank you to all our volunteers who become family to those who need it most.

Important Updates for All Volunteers

IMPORTANT

1- Changes to Travel Expense Claims

Starting March 2026, we will be updating our process for volunteer reimbursements. To ensure our records are accurate and transparent, we will be asking all volunteers to submit **travel tickets** or **digital receipts** alongside their expense claims.

We know this is a change to the usual routine, so we want to make the transition as smooth as possible:

- **Guided Support:** We will be providing hands-on support and walkthroughs to show you exactly how to capture and upload your tickets. This will be available through your link workers.
- **Policy Update:** Our Volunteer Expenses Policy will be updated to reflect these changes, providing clear guidance on what is required. We will share this with you soon.
- **Here to Help:** If you aren't tech-savvy or have concerns about the new process, don't worry we'll make sure you're comfortable with the steps before the March start date.

Thank you for your continued dedication and for helping us keep our administrative processes running efficiently!

2- Supporting Your Learner's Next Step

Is your learner ready for the next step in their learning? Please speak with your **link worker** about whether a conversation group or an ESOL class might be suitable, and how your learner can take this next step. Your learner may also continue working with you during the transition period to their next stage of learning.

3- Reading & Writing - Volunteer Workshop

The next volunteer workshop 'Reading & Writing - Volunteer Workshop' is on Thursday, 26 March 2026, 13:00-15:30 at SAVTE.

Would you like to explore areas of reading and writing that may be important for your learner?

You will have the opportunity to share ideas, consider approaches to reading and writing and look at resources.

This interactive workshop is open to all one-to-one volunteers.

Please book on the link to reserve a place. [Click here](#)

4- Getting Together Event

We're inviting all **our 1:1 volunteers** to join us for an informal coffee morning.

The event will take place **on Wednesday, 15 April 2026, from 10:30 to 11:30 am** in the Lower Hall at SAVTE.

The aim of this event is to:

- Bring our one-to-one volunteers together
- Share experiences with learners
- Discuss what works well and what could be improved
- Connect and support each other
- Come along, have a coffee, and enjoy a friendly chat with fellow volunteers!

Please book on the link to reserve a place. [Click here](#)

Snapshots: Winter 2025

• English Skills My Health

The new community ESOL class 'English Skills My Health' has got off to a great start with 14 learners attending regularly at Darnall Wellbeing. Learners are developing vocabulary and confidence to communicate with medical professionals and make choices about health issues.

Many learners told us they would like to practise using online forms to manage health care so the class is also focusing on these digital skills.



The poster for the 'English Skills My Health' 8-week ESOL Class features the SAVTE Darnall Wellbeing logo at the top. The main title is 'English Skills My Health' in large, bold letters, with '8-week ESOL Class' underneath. Key information includes the course dates from 6/5/2026 to 1/7/2026 and an entry requirement of 'Entry 2+ & subject to eligibility criteria'. An 'Assessment & Enrolment' session is scheduled for 29th April from 12:30-2:30. The course focuses on developing English skills to talk about health, contact services, and speak with confidence. The location is Darnall Primary Care Centre, 290 Main Rd, Darnall, S9 4QH. A QR code and a link to the contact form are provided at the bottom.

The next English Skills My Health course will be starting in April. This is an 8 week course running on Wednesday afternoons. **Please share this information with any learners who might be interested.**

If you are not sure if the English Skills My Health course is the right thing for your learner/learners please ask your Link Worker for more information.

• Stronger Together Event

On 16 October 2025, SAVTE brought together city leaders from the council, charity, and business sectors with our English Conversation group at the City of Sanctuary. Learners shared their experiences of attending SAVTE sessions and the positive impact on themselves and Sheffield.

Our CEO, Jo Holliday, said:

"I was inspired by our learners sharing their stories with city leaders. This event highlighted SAVTE's strengths: inclusivity, collaboration, and connection."



• New CG at Parson Cross.

In November 25, responding to learner demand in the area, SAVTE set up a new Conversation Group at Parson Cross in partnership with Parson Cross Initiative.



The group is led by 2 of our new volunteers Razia and Jo and is well attended by around 12 learners weekly. We look forward to developing more provision in the area soon.

• SAVTE in Action: Voices Heard, Barriers Tackled

On 18 November 2025, **Healthwatch Sheffield** joined a SAVTE Conversation group at Pat Midgley Community Hub to gather feedback on barriers to accessing dental care on the Gleadless estate.

Learners, volunteers, and medical students worked together to share experiences and insights. SAVTE tutors supported the session by explaining new words and helping participants fully engage in discussions and surveys, turning the visit into a learning experience as well as an opportunity to make their voices heard, showing exactly how SAVTE empowers people through connection and learning.

A screenshot of a report from Healthwatch Sheffield. The report title is "Healthwatch Sheffield at SAVTE (Sheffield Association for the Voluntary Teaching of English) Conversation group". The text describes the visit on Tuesday 18th November 2025 to the Pat Midgley Community Hub. It mentions that the group is a free, informal English language practice group for non-native speakers run by SAVTE. The report notes that Healthwatch Sheffield gathered people's views on health and social care in Sheffield and shares them with decision makers. It also mentions that the conversation group tutors supported the session by identifying new or unfamiliar words within the questions used and explaining their meanings to the group.

healthwatch SAVTE
Sheffield

Healthwatch Sheffield at SAVTE (Sheffield Association for the Voluntary Teaching of English) Conversation group

Healthwatch Sheffield gathers people's views on health and social care in Sheffield and shares them with decision makers, to inform improvements. On Tuesday 18th November 2025, we went to **SAVTE Conversation group at Pat Midgley Community Hub** - a free, informal English language practice group for non-native speakers run by **SAVTE**, to help adults build confidence and skills in speaking and listening through social interaction, often serving as a stepping stone to formal classes. At our visit, we spoke to the students and their tutors who were volunteers, about their experiences with **health and social care services** in Sheffield.

The Conversation group tutors supported the session by identifying new or unfamiliar words within the questions we used. They wrote these words on the board and explained their meanings to the group, helping to ensure participants could fully understand the questions and engage confidently in both the discussion and surveys, as well as learn new words.

[Read the full Healthwatch Sheffield report here](#)

• Medical Students Gain Community Insight at SAVTE

Third-year medical students Karam and Antonia spent four weeks on placement with SAVTE, working closely with learners, volunteers, and staff.

During their time, they helped identify gaps in our resources and developed a new learning pack to support learners in confidently discussing dental health an addition that will benefit the community long-term.



Jo, Hazel, Karam & Antonia

Reflecting on his placement, Karam said:

"My time at SAVTE gave me insight into people's struggles within the community and the impact of language and cultural barriers on accessing services. The team were welcoming and flexible, allowing me to focus on activities that were most rewarding. The skills I developed will be directly transferable to my future clinical practice, and this placement has been one of the highlights of my medical school journey, and I highly recommend it to future students."

• Welcome to Our New SAVTE Volunteers!

We are delighted to welcome the newest members of the SAVTE family! Our recently trained 1-1 language support volunteers and Conversation Group volunteers have completed their training and are now ready to support learners across Sheffield.



1-1 language support volunteers



Conversation Group volunteers

We look forward to seeing the positive impact they will have and the connections they will create as part of our growing SAVTE family!

We hope you enjoy this edition and look forward to bringing you the next one in July 2026.

We'd love to hear your thoughts!