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### **Swansea volunteers recognised by The Queen with prestigious Award**

Local Aid 'Buddies Project' based in Swansea has been announced as one of 103 UK volunteering groups to win The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, the MBE for volunteer groups.

The prestigious National Honour recognises outstanding contributions made to local communities by groups voluntarily devoting their time for the benefit of others. It sets the national benchmark for excellence in volunteering, with the work of those awarded being judged of the highest standard.

Local Aid 'Buddies' has received the Award in recognition of the support they offer to children and young people age 8 to 18 with severe learning difficulties and challenging behaviour, their families, siblings and young carers. The project is run every Saturday from Friendship House and is aimed at developing social and independence skills through accessing all there is to offer in and around Swansea Bay, as well as providing much needed respite for families. More than 70 young volunteers give up their spare time to help provide fun, choice activities such as sports, arts and crafts, trips out, cookery and much more.

Winners of this year's Award were selected from 341 groups nominated by members of the public who have been helped personally or witnessed the benefits of a group's work in their community.

Local Aid will receive a certificate signed by the Queen and an exclusive commemorative crystal, presented by Her Majesty's representative in West Glamorgan MR D. Byron Lewis ESQ CStJ. FCA. at a special ceremony. The group have also received an invitation for representatives to attend a Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace in the summer.

Speaking of their success, Chairperson Denise Inger from Local Aid said: "We are thrilled to have received this prestigious honour in recognition of the work we do within the local community. This award is a great testimony to the hard work of the staff and volunteers who support the charity. The young people volunteering at

'Buddies' are exceptional, they give a commitment to young people with severe learning disabilities and gain valuable experience to help build more inclusive communities".

The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service Main Award Committee Chair and former broadcast journalist Martyn Lewis CBE said,

"Outstanding volunteer groups across the UK all too often go without recognition for the truly amazing work they do, despite the vital part they play in helping bind our communities together. It's a great pleasure to celebrate the efforts of Local Aid ' Buddies' with The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service and help raise awareness of all they do for the benefit of others."

More than 850 groups around the UK, Channel Islands and Isle of Man have now won the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, over the eight years since it was created by Her Majesty to mark the occasion of her Golden Jubilee in 2002.

For details of all this year's Award winners and information on how to nominate a group, visit [www.direct.gov.uk/thequeensawardforvoluntaryservice](http://www.direct.gov.uk/thequeensawardforvoluntaryservice), where a nomination form can be downloaded.

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**For further information**

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**Note to editors**

**About the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service**

In 2002, in celebration of Her Majesty's Golden Jubilee, the Queen's Golden Jubilee Award for Voluntary Service by Groups in the Community was established. Its purpose is to recognise groups of individuals who are giving their time freely for the benefit of others. It is the highest honour that can be bestowed upon groups of this kind and is equivalent in status to the MBE. As such, the Queen's Award not only serves to provide recognition of volunteer groups, but also demonstrates the high respect in which volunteering is held.

The Award is overseen by the Office of Civil Society (OCS). As part of the Cabinet Office, the OCS leads work across government to support the environment for a thriving third sector (voluntary and community groups, social enterprises, charities, cooperatives and mutuals), enabling it to campaign for change, deliver public services, promote social enterprise and strengthen communities.

Groups must be nominated for the Award – self nomination is not permitted. A group (two or more people) can be nominated if it is based in the UK, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. The group has to have been volunteering for the benefit of people in the UK or overseas for at least three years and more than half its members must be volunteers who have the right of residence in the UK. Groups solely concerned with fundraising for charitable purposes are not eligible. Further details on entrance criteria and the nomination process are available from [www.direct.gov.uk/thequeensawardforvoluntaryservice](http://www.direct.gov.uk/thequeensawardforvoluntaryservice).

**About Local Aid:**

Local Aid was founded in the late 1980's and became a registered charity in April 1990. The organisation runs several projects throughout each year. 'Buddies' has run for over ten years. For more information visit [www.localaid.co.uk](http://www.localaid.co.uk)