

livelife

The magazine for HASSRA members

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HASSRA
Living Life 

HASSRA Members' Biennial Survey 2025

A huge thank you to everyone who took part in the **HASSRA Members' Survey** launched last year. We received almost 3,000 responses, and from those who chose to provide their details, 40 lucky winners were selected at random to receive a £50 Love2Shop voucher.

HASSRA is now reviewing all the valuable insight you shared and is developing an action plan to address the themes and concerns you raised. Here are some of the early headlines.

One clear message from the survey is that many retired members feel less visible, excluded, or disconnected from the wider network. To respond to this, we have established a Retired Members' Forum, supported by a team of volunteers who stepped forward following our recent call for interest. This forum will give retired members a dedicated space to come together, share their experiences, and ensure their voices are heard.

To help build that sense of community, a Retired Members' Message Board has also been launched, providing a simple way for members to connect, exchange ideas, and stay engaged. In addition, HASSRA has launched a Retired Members' Grant to offer financial support for organised activities that promote wellbeing, inclusion and connection.

Similarly, many of our younger members told us they want a stronger voice in shaping HASSRA's future. In response, we have set up a Youth Forum to ensure we continue to adapt to changing priorities and remain relevant, engaging, and inclusive for the next generation of members. This forum will play a key role in influencing future developments, including ideas for refreshed member offers and a modernised sporting and recreational activities programme that will enhance and complement our existing offer.

The survey also highlighted some uncertainty around funding for sporting and recreational activities. We would like to reassure members that there has been no significant change to HASSRA's Travel and Subsistence Policy. For full transparency and to help address any misconceptions, the policy remains available to [view here](#).

There are several areas where members feel HASSRA could do more to ensure our activities, opportunities and culture are fully inclusive, accessible and representative of our diverse membership. We are committed to taking

meaningful steps to address these concerns and warmly welcome ideas, suggestions and livedexperience insights from members to help shape a more open, modern and supportive organisation.

We will also continue our partnership with the Activity Alliance at future Festivals to ensure we introduce more inclusive events, building on the success of previous Boccia and Pickleball taster sessions. This ongoing collaboration will help us broaden participation and ensure our activities reflect the needs of all members. In this issue, you can also read a powerful personal account from a member who attended a Festival while managing a long-term health condition – an important reminder of why accessibility and inclusion must remain central to everything we do.

As we reflect on the feedback you've shared, it's clear that HASSRA has an exciting opportunity to evolve.

We recognise that there is still more work to do, and we remain fully committed to making the meaningful changes needed to strengthen our community, enhance inclusivity, and ensure every member feels valued and represented.

Your voices have set the direction, and your ideas will continue to shape what comes next. Together, we can build a HASSRA that is modern, accessible, vibrant and reflective of the diverse membership we are proud to serve.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the survey – and to all who support, challenge and inspire us to do better. We look forward to working with you as we bring these improvements to life and create an even stronger HASSRA for 2026 and beyond.

Welcome to the Spring Edition of Livelife

Spring always brings with it a sense of renewal – fresh energy, new beginnings and the perfect moment to look ahead with optimism. That spirit is at the heart of this edition, as we continue building on the success of HASSRA's 90th Anniversary celebrations last year and set our sights on being even better in 2026.

We're currently reviewing our membership benefits to make sure we continue offering a wide range of valuable discounts and opportunities. Your feedback plays a key role in shaping what we provide, so we're using insights from the recent Members' Survey and discussions on the National Message Board to guide our updates. Thank you for helping us keep HASSRA benefits relevant, exciting and genuinely worthwhile for everyone.

If you have any suggestions, [please post them here](#) and we will make enquiries.

We also share a heartfelt personal story from one of our members, reflecting on her deep connection to HASSRA and how the community supported her through challenging times – a powerful reminder of the difference we make far beyond events and competitions.

Alongside this, enjoy a roundup of the latest Business Unit Grants, an update on the HASSRA Development Fund, and a very delicious addition: our new Cookery Book compilation, packed with personally submitted favourites.

If you're lucky enough to have some leave planned, I hope you enjoy the longer days and warmer weather ahead and take time to focus on the things that matter most to you. Behind the scenes, we're busy planning the glittering Annual Awards celebration and our much-loved Festivals, where we look forward to seeing familiar faces and welcoming new guests too. Remember, be kind to yourself.



Here's to a bright spring and an even brighter year ahead.

Jacky Sneddon
Editor

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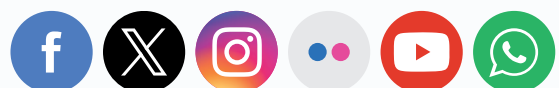


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HYROX with HASSRA

Thanks to the support of the **HASSRA Development Fund**, I recently began my journey towards becoming a qualified **HYROX** coach. I have completed the **HYROX** Foundation Course and am currently working through the **Level 1** qualification.

Soon after completing the Foundation course, I was given the opportunity to put my learning into practice by organising and leading a full **HYROX** Simulation event at my local gym. While I had previously helped with these events, this time I took the lead role – planning the format, co-ordinating participants, and acting as Head Judge on the day.

The event was a great success, with strong attendance and very positive feedback from those who took part. It was a valuable experience that allowed me to build confidence in coaching, event delivery, and supporting athletes in a structured **HYROX** environment.

As a direct result, the gym manager has now asked me to run a weekly **HYROX** class every Sunday. This is an exciting step forward in my coaching journey and will give me regular hands-on experience working with a range of abilities.


Looking ahead, my long-term aim is to help promote functional fitness for older adults, particularly those aged 50 and over. Having started my own fitness journey later in life, I am passionate about showing that age should never be a barrier to improving health, strength and confidence. The experience gained through this training and the weekly classes will provide a strong foundation for developing sessions specifically tailored to this age group.

I'm very grateful to **HASSRA** for their support. The funding has already opened new opportunities for me and will ultimately help me give something back by encouraging more people to get active and enjoy the benefits of fitness.

Clint Williams



HYROX



If you would like to learn more about how the **HASSRA Development Fund** can support you to achieve your personal goals or to apply for the grant, please visit the **HASSRA Development Fund**.

How HASSRA Helped Me Find My Way Back

I was off work for two years and, during that time, I often felt isolated and forgotten about. My line manager kept in touch regularly and I contacted them whenever I had updates, but otherwise I was largely on my own. Sometimes that space was exactly what I needed, but at other times it made me feel invisible and abandoned. That might sound dramatic, but work - and everything that comes with it, including the social side - had been a big part of my life. Seeing colleagues on Facebook on nights out made me feel sad, and being off long-term absolutely chips away at your confidence. You start to wonder if anyone even noticed you weren't there. That's one of the not-so-great sides of home and hybrid working: out of sight, out of mind. And to be clear, that's not an attention-seeking statement, (although I do enjoy a wee bit of attention, who doesn't?).

During that period, I received emails from HASSRA Atlantic Quay to my personal address. I'd read them and think, Should I sign up? Am I even allowed to go to events while I'm off? Evelyn would message asking if I fancied this or that event. I'd always reply, I'll think about it. Then one day I finally said yes - and off I went, nervous and excited at the same time. I'm so glad I did. It was the best day I'd had in a long time and made me feel part of something again. After that, I started saying yes to other things too.

One event was the Glynhill Christmas night, with an overnight stay. It was the week before I was due to return to work, and it felt like the biggest thing I'd done in years. I was hesitant, but Evelyn convinced me. At reception, I bumped into Jacky, who I hadn't seen in a few years because we don't work together but I'd see her occasionally at HASSRA events. She didn't know what had been going on with me, so we had a wee chat and I filled her in. I told her I was going back the following week and was nervous and apprehensive. She said I didn't need to be nervous - that people would have missed me, that I was well-liked and good company. I was so overwhelmed by her kindness that I teared up, and she just said she was only telling me what others would be thinking.

The night at Glynhill was brilliant and exactly the confidence boost I needed before what I'd built up in my head as "the big return."

When I did go back the following week, I wasn't nearly as full of dread as I'd expected. Mixing again with colleagues at the HASSRA events - and that chance meeting with Jacky - made such a difference. I want to thank HASSRA Atlantic Quay for keeping in touch, encouraging me, coaxing me, and even pleading with me at times to "come out to play," and I want to thank Jacky for her kind, grounding, supportive words.

Once I was back in the office, it was lovely seeing everyone again - and she was right. People were pleased to see me, and I had been missed. Not by the whole office (I'm not that delusional!), but by enough people that it meant a lot.

Angela
HASSRA Atlantic Quay, Glasgow

HASSRA

HASSRA Business Units Grants

In an organisation as broad and geographically dispersed as DWP, staying connected isn't always easy – which is exactly why the HASSRA Business Unit Grant (BUG) was created. Designed to support colleagues working across dispersed locations, the fund has enabled teams to bring people together, boost wellbeing, and strengthen inclusivity in ways that truly matter. From shared activities to morale-lifting initiatives, members across the DWP estate have used the grant to build community, foster connection, and ensure everyone feels part of something bigger.

In 2025 HASSRA awarded 39 BUGs totalling £5,250 and benefitting 1,480 members. Here a few examples of how the BUGs were used.

Hayley Marshall CFCD

On behalf of the team, I would like to express our sincere thanks for the generous grant provided by HASSRA. It was very much appreciated and made a real difference to our first meeting as a newly expanded team.

The funding enabled us to enjoy bowling and a tram ride to see the Blackpool illuminations, providing a fantastic opportunity to strengthen relationships and build bonds outside of work. Our new team members were delighted by this support and are now considering joining HASSRA themselves.

Annabel Williams Financial Investigations – Central and Wales

We have just finished our 2-day event, and I wanted to provide you with some feedback on how it went! My teams had a fantastic couple of days and really appreciated getting together face-to-face. We spent a significant part of the agenda focusing on people and wellbeing, including mindfulness exercises and networking time.

I utilised the BUG budget to arrange a group lunch and a prize for a paper 'escape room' exercise. The team thoroughly enjoyed the activities, and the competition for the prize money was very spirited!

The HASSRA branded items were a hit, and I ensured everyone knew the source of the funding that supported our event. We have already arranged for a HASSRA rep to attend one of our comms hours to promote HASSRA membership further. Thank you so much again for your support.

Sharon Blow DWP People & Capability

Thank you once again for supporting our recent events through the Business Unit Grant. We are especially grateful to Phil Corbett for his well-received presentation, which provided a fantastic opportunity to share HASSRA's benefits with colleagues across the North East, North West, and Nottinghamshire. The grant also enabled us to provide refreshments that were very much appreciated by everyone who attended.



As these initiatives have shown, a Business Unit Grant is far more than funding – it's a catalyst for connection.

From small gestures that spark big smiles to events that bring whole teams together, every idea has the power to make a difference.

We can't wait to see what your teams will dream up next. If you've been inspired, now's the time to take that first step and apply. Let's make 2026 even brighter – together.

For more information and how to apply for [Business Unit Grant](#) click here.

COOKING UP CONNECTIONS:

Celebrating Cultural Diversity Across the Civil Service

My first year serving on the HASSRA Diversity & Inclusion Committee has been one of pride, purpose, and the occasional moment of “How on earth did we pull that off?”

Stepping into this role, I knew the responsibility was big. The Committee had a mission statement that was quite daunting; helping shape a Civil Service where everyone feels seen, represented, and valued. What I didn't expect was just how inspiring (and energising!) the journey would become.

“We created something meaningful, joyful, and enduring”.

From day one, I wanted to bring people together in a way that felt meaningful, joyful, and true to who we are, not just colleagues in lanyards, but individuals shaped by rich cultures, traditions, and memories. As the Lead of the Civil Service Wellbeing Community Support Group, I set myself a small challenge: reach out to every department across the Civil Service and ask a simple, and slightly risky, question – **“What's your favourite recipe, and why does it matter to you?”**

The response? Let's just say my inbox has never recovered! Colleagues from every corner of the UK shared signature dishes, family favourites and recipes passed down through generations, and the beloved meals that get them through the hardest days. What started as a curious idea suddenly became a beautifully diverse cookbook! A flavour-filled celebration of the people who make our HASSRA & the Civil Service so special.

Editing the cookbook, sourcing photos, getting it published and delivered to every office in the country was a genuine pinchme moment. It wasn't just about food (though the snacks were fantastic). It was about equality, inclusion, and recognising the richness of our community. Every recipe told a story, and every story strengthened our shared identity and made being on the Committee and a Wellbeing Lead worthwhile.

Looking back on this first year, I'm humbled by the kindness, enthusiasm, and trust from colleagues everywhere. We created something meaningful, joyful, and enduring. And if this is what we achieved in year one... well, year two better buckle up.

If you'd like a copy of the multi-cultural recipe book please contact nishan.jeyasingam@defra.gov.uk

Nishan Jeyasingham



90th Anniversary Celebrations

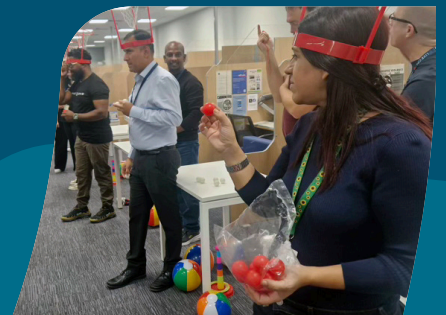
Last year, as HASSRA marked a truly special milestone – our 90th Anniversary – we introduced a dedicated club grant to help members celebrate in style. HASSRA awarded nearly 250 grants totalling £35,000, which benefitted almost 40,000 members and colleagues throughout our 90th Anniversary year. We invited clubs to share how they used the funding, and here are just a few wonderful examples of how you invested the grant to support the wellbeing and enjoyment of your members.

Fun, and friendly competitive spirit with HASSRA funded games at Gravesend from Mel Clare. This looks so much fun and must have raised a few laughs – so good for Wellbeing.

Another sure way to a HASSRA Member's heart is food. Stratford Jobcentre's Martin Crocker tells us how they used their 90th Anniversary Grant to celebrate with food and a Quiz. That's a great Notice Board you have there too!

Warren Gardner from Southend and his fellow HASSRA members put on a party, free to all HASSRA members with music and a complimentary buffet – looks like a great night was had by all.

The 90th Anniversary Grant has demonstrated the real impact that targeted support can have across our clubs. By investing in wellbeing, community, and shared experiences, we've seen members benefit in meaningful and lasting ways. We look forward to continuing this commitment as we shape the next chapter of HASSRA's story.



I Found My Voice with HASSRA

I have been fortunate to take part in the HASSRA Festival on several occasions over the years, both as a competitor and as a volunteer.

I have competed in the Music Competition multiple times, initially while based in the East Midlands and more recently representing the West Midlands.

Taking part in the music competition played a huge role in building my confidence as a vocalist. I was thrilled to win the Contemporary Vocal category for the first time in 2016, and again in 2022.

These experiences gave me the confidence to pursue a longheld ambition of forming an acoustic

duo. I now perform as a vocalist in Edie's Echo and occasionally perform with my husband's rock band, Rebel Rising - something I genuinely credit to HASSRA.

Last year, I also had the opportunity to try Boccia for the first time. It was completely new to me, but I had such a great time and really enjoyed stepping outside my comfort zone.

As a neurodivergent person, the HASSRA Festival has been incredibly important to me. It helps me come out of my shell, meet new people,



and build meaningful connections. Everyone is so welcoming and friendly - it truly feels like a safe and inclusive space.

I am incredibly grateful for everything HASSRA does to make the festival possible year after year. Thank you so much for creating such a supportive, enjoyable, and inspiring experience.

Maria Watch

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Step into the Winners Circle WITH WINSPIRATIONAL PRIZES

The recent Members' Survey made one thing very clear: HASSRA members love to win, but the cost-of-living crisis continues to weigh heavily on their minds. In response, we are exploring ways to enhance our much-loved competitions and are developing a **Special Giveaway** with a regional winner guarantee to offer meaningful financial support. More details will follow soon, so keep an eye on your inbox for updates.

If you have any suggestions for types of puzzles, competitions, or prizes, please send them to hassracommunications.andmarketing@dwp.gov.uk.

You are invited to help shape the future of our October Double Lottery Draw with three exciting options. Should we keep the current structure and double the cash value of all **150 prizes** (turning the top prize into £40,000)? Would you prefer to double the number of winners to 300 members overall?

Or would you choose a hybrid option that doubles the top prize to **£40,000** while doubling the number of winners for every other tier?

Your vote will decide the outcome – so [have your say here](#).

How One Lottery Jackpot Winner Celebrated

I'd heard rumours buzzing around the office that someone in Falkirk had struck lucky in the HASSRA lottery. That was enough to get me quickly checking my personal emails – after all, I've had my two numbers for 33 years, ever since I joined the Civil Service. Nothing there... so I shrugged it off and got on with my day.

The following Wednesday, a message pinged on Teams from HASSRA: "Can you check the junk folder in your personal email account?" My heart started going. I opened the folder... and nearly fell off my chair.

I was a £20,000 winner!

I just stared at the screen – completely speechless. It took a moment for it to sink in, but once it did, I finally got to put my colleagues out of their misery and revealed who the mystery winner was.

To celebrate, I treated the teams to sweets across the three jobcentres I work in, bought drinks for my family at our festive catch-up, and shared the win with my husband and boys.

I also treated myself to a special piece of jewellery, something I had always wanted.

What an unbelievable surprise – one I'll never forget!

Summer's Nearly Here – Time for a Glow Up!

Get ready to spruce up your home or garden... because **HASSRA will soon be giving away TEN amazing £250 vouchers to help you do exactly that!**

Whether you're dreaming of colourful planters, entertaining with summer barbeques or lounging comfortably in your very own sun trap – this could be your chance to make it happen.

Available soon on the **WIN page**, check out how to enter, and make sure you throw your name into the mix. Your summer spruceup starts here – and you've got to be in it to win it!

**TO ENTER, VISIT:
HASSRA Competitions & Prize Draws**

Celebrating the Impact of One Exceptional Volunteer

Congratulations to Nicholas Oconnor for his incredible dedication to the HASSRA Canterbury team. Nick consistently goes above and beyond, putting his heart and soul into creating memorable experiences for our members.

From organising trips to Belgium and the Battle Bar to delivering seasonal celebrations and the HASSRA 90th Anniversary, Nick ensures every event is inclusive and flawlessly executed. His energy and "roll up your sleeves" attitude inspire everyone around him, while his creativity has taken our social programme to an entirely new level.



Thanks to Nick's tireless efforts, we have seen a significant rise in HASSRA's visibility and membership, strengthening our sense of community. He doesn't just support the team; he champions it through collaboration and genuine care. He truly stands out as a HASSRA hero.

Nominated by: Stella Fuller

A heartfelt thank you from HASSRA to all our volunteers – your generosity, dedication, and hard work make everything we achieve possible.

If you know a HASSRA Hero and would like to make a nomination for 2026 – [see here](#) for further information.




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