

## Ann's story

Ann has volunteered for a number of years at Age UK North Tyneside's Dementia Singalong Memories group. This group brings together people with dementia and their family members, carers and supporters to enjoy singing along to their old favourites.

Ann first attended the group as a customer, with her husband, following his diagnosis of dementia in 2014. She says that her husband had never been a 'musical' person, but always enjoyed music. She was amazed however at his response to music in the setting of the Singalong Memories group.

When he was unfortunately no longer able to attend, Ann felt strongly that she wanted to give back to a group. It had enriched both of their lives and given them something they could continue to share together when dementia took away many of their other previously enjoyed activities.

Ann subsequently joined the team of volunteers and has played an integral role since. She states that volunteering has been immensely pleasurable and rewarding over the last few years. She would encourage anyone to consider giving their time and skills, for the opportunity to help others and the rewards it brings in return.

Ann finds it reassuring to know that Age UK North Tyneside is there in the background and able to offer advice or assistance if needed to support the group members and volunteers.

The comradeship amongst the team of volunteers has been greatly appreciated by Ann over the years. The support of the group in the past to herself as a carer has not been forgotten and made a real difference, particularly being able to meet others in the same situation to share experiences and strategies. Ann is now sadly widowed and lives alone.

Ann has enjoyed the varied aspects of the volunteering role. As well as taking her turn choosing the song programme and leading the singing. She has built a great rapport with customers, and offers a welcoming smile and a listening ear to those in need. She takes great satisfaction from her role.

Ann says, "To anyone thinking about volunteering I would say do it – helping others really enriches you yourself."

"I have gained nothing but pleasure from being part of the group, and have been able to help others from my own experiences of a loved one being affected by dementia. That little group is an oasis in the desert of dementia."