

## Volunteers' Week

### Gerry



Gerry Robinson 81, retired Aircraft Engineer, is an experienced Volunteer Befriender with Age UK North Tyneside.

Supporting befriendees in our community since 2015, Gerry usually visits befriendees in their home environment to help reduce their social isolation and loneliness.

When the nation entered lockdown in March 2020, Gerry recognised that it was going to be tough for us all and many of us might lose our confidence as the weeks progressed.

Gerry wanted to help and offered to telephone two of our customers regularly, building strong trusting friendships over time. Gerry believes that sharing happy memories helps us all to maintain our confidence and self-esteem. He said

“I try to help by taking Carole and Angela back to the happiest times in their lives. We re-enact them together, and as I am 81 and have some experience of life, I can engage and empathise with them on so many topics.

They actually chuckle and laugh a lot as we draw back the curtains of time and walk through the portals of memory to their earlier days of joy and happiness.

Luckily, memory plays good tricks sometimes, and they remember the lovely times with their husbands and children. Looking back it seems their children rarely misbehaved and how they all laughed so much, and of course the sun then seemed to shine almost every day.”

Gerry’s friendship has made a real difference. Gerry said

“When we discuss these things, I can feel them becoming stronger and most importantly, more confident.

And, of course, through bringing happiness and laughter to Carole and Angela it is also impacting on myself. My daughter, who is a paramedic, and spends her life rescuing and helping other people has noticed the change in me. It is a change for the better brought about by listening and sharing experiences.”

Befriending Coordinator Beverley Swan agrees

“Studies show that the benefits of having a befriending relationship result in positive outcomes for everyone. Being part of the community, doing something meaningful, helping others and perhaps trying something new, makes everyone’s confidence grow.”