

Volunteers' Week John



People often ask us what it's like to volunteer. Befriending Coordinator Beverley Swan asked Volunteer Befriender John Dodds to help us answer the question.

John, 75 from Wallsend, joined Age UK North Tyneside in January 2020 to visit isolated older people in their homes, providing much needed face to face friendship. Due to COVID-19, John had to stop visiting customers in their homes and instead began Telephone Befriending instead. When lockdown ends and it is safe to do so, John will be switching back from telephone calls to home visits, with our support.

John's interests include, local & military history, gardening and, as you will soon find out, poetry. Volunteering appealed to John because he felt it was "an ideal way to give back to the community".

Everyone offers their time for different reasons. John said, "Becoming a Volunteer Befriender gave me a new outlook on life and a new challenge. I'm very comfortable in the role. It's easy to volunteer and we welcome people with a wide variety of experience. John agreed, "You don't need lots of qualifications to do this. If you like people, it's something you can do."

When our volunteers need support, we're there for them too. John sums it up like this, "There's a good support element from you and I appreciate it, the fact that you get in touch every month. It's good to know that I can ring you any time as well, if I need to talk something through."

'Geordie' John has written a verse about befriending with Age UK North Tyneside. We love it and hope you enjoy it too. John ended our chat by saying, "We all have little gifts. All you have to do is find your story."

*Noo Geordie was a canny lad
and he worked hard evory day
He'd aalways been a grafter
It was the Geordie way.*

*Geordie thowt it a great idea
so he applied and got a start
Just phoning housebound people
and having a good old heart to heart.*

*But when his time come to retire
whey Geordie was at a loose end.
Didn't knaa what to do with hissels
until he met a friend.*

*Aye Geordie's really a much happier man
since he joined with Age UK
And the time he spends, talking with new friends
really brightens up his day*

*She said why not become a befriender
a volunteer with Age UK
You can use your love of people
To help others along the way.*

*It's great being a befriender
being of use to those around
I've got this beat, I'm not obsolete
When there's so many new friends to be found.*

By John E M Dodds