

Feedback from Steve and Harold about their experience of Age UK Sheffield's Befriending/In Touch Service

The new Porter Valley In Touch Service will involve visiting an older person who is lonely or isolated, often in their own home and helping them in various ways. To get an idea of how rewarding our In Touch service can be please read the feedback from Harold, one of our clients, and Steve, the volunteer who visits him each week. This feedback has been given about Age UK Sheffield's existing Befriending/In Touch service. Both Harold and Steve consented to their feedback and photo being shared and the feedback was shared with us in Jan 2020.

Feedback from Steve, the volunteer who has been visiting Harold since July 2019:

How often do you see them or contact Harold?

Every Thursday at 16:30, we have a set time as Harold doesn't have a phone so we stick to these times and days. If I am not available, we discuss this on the previous visit so that he knows not to expect me. I did go over a little more around the Christmas and New Year period though.

What have you most enjoyed doing? I love going to Harold's, he is a bit deaf so he waits in the kitchen window for me to arrive (so he doesn't miss me) and jumps up when he sees me come through the gate. I can hear him talking to himself "He's here, he's a good lad, I like to see him". It's funny but that is one of the best bits of my week. He isn't saying it for my benefit; he probably has no idea that I can hear him to be honest. It's just brilliant to know that he really does look forward to seeing me.

Do you feel that you have helped Harold to become more confident/integrate into the community more/improve their lives at all? I wouldn't say that I have helped him no, (apart from the fact that I always make the tea) as he's quite independent and goes out every day. I think he likes to see and chat with someone different each week and if that makes him happy then maybe I'm helping in some small way, and that's fine.

Do you feel that as a volunteer you have enough support in your role? If not, please explain...

I'm not sure that I personally need a huge amount of support with Harold, I did need help with the person who I visited a couple of years ago and I got this pretty quickly. So I guess that the short answer is yes, when required I know there is assistance if required.

Is there anything that has been difficult or complicated about the befriending service or something we could do better? Not really, the most difficult bit was the fact that I can't get hold of Harold but that has actually become one of the best things now. We have set time and a structure in place, there is no way to alter plans, so we work around each other. Harold always makes sure that he is back from his travels on time and I always make sure I leave work on time every Thursday. It works really well, just like back in the old days before mobile phones 😊, we honour our commitment to be where we say we are going to be.

Could you say how you feel/felt about taking part in the service? It feels like I get more out of the process than anyone else, the people we visit may say different though. I look forward to going along every week and Harold is teaching me all kinds of classical music and opera trivia, that I would never have thought to look at.

Everyone has one hour to give in their lives and that hour could be the best hour of somebody else's week. If that's not motivation enough to do this then I don't know what is.

I decided a couple of years ago that I would give time towards this initiative and its one of the best things I have ever done. I encourage others to do the same and I speak about my volunteering every month at work when we take on new staff members.

I can't see a time when I don't do this. Even if we forget the benefits to the people we visit, I have found that this process has also helped with my own mental health maintenance. Its relaxing, enjoyable, calming and gives me great satisfaction. Thanks for letting me take part.

Feedback from Harold, Who is visited by Steve every week

What have you most enjoyed doing? I like it when he comes; we watch films and have a cup of tea. It's funny because he looks like that wrestler (I discovered that this was Brian Glover – quite funny but not that flattering 😊)

Is there anything that you have not been able to do for a long time but have been able to do because of the In Touch Service? Or is there anything new that you have started to do? Not really, but it is great to have a regular visits form Steve

Is there anything that has been difficult or complicated about the service or something we could do better? No

Could you say how you felt before the service and how you feel now? I get out most days anyway, but I don't get many visitors anymore. It's nice to have Steve coming around at the same time on the same day every week; it gives me something to look forward to.



Image of Steve and Harold together