

VOLUNTEER VIEWS

THE NEWSLETTER FOR AGE UK SUNDERLAND VOLUNTEERS
FEBRUARY - APRIL 2019

STEPPING THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR

Age UK Sunderland's new **Front Door** service aims to provide low level tailored support which enables our older people to stay independent for longer in their local communities.

The service offers a single point of contact, which now means that information is more readily available to people who will benefit from it and that there can be early interventions, which can offer flexible low-level community based support to those older people who do not require intensive or specialised support from statutory services such as Adult Services.

This new service operates a one-stop referral system for older people who are:

- Resident within the City of Sunderland
- Have no formal health or social care package of support from statutory services or would not qualify for local authority social care.
- Require low level social and signposting support and practical information.
- Are caring for family, friends and neighbours.

A new team of Living Well Link Workers are now promoting the Front Door Service across the city and are interacting with health, housing, social care and voluntary services accessing

support from a wide range of community resources.

To support the new team, some familiar Age UK Sunderland services including Advocacy, Keeping in Touch Befriending and Community Clubs, are now part of this innovative new project.

Front Door Manager Melanie Dunn (pictured right) explains "Our volunteers are invaluable and underpin the work we do for the people who access Front Door. Many of our volunteers have been with us for a number of years and are valued for the ongoing support and commitment they offer. We are very keen to expand the number of active volunteers and invite new volunteers to join our organisation".



*Step through the **Front Door** overleaf to look at the work carried out week by week by two of the many volunteers working in these services.*

LIVING WELL AND BEYOND CANCER

The new **Living Well and Beyond Cancer** project has started within Age UK Sunderland and needs volunteers. It is a national 'transformational' project which aims to improve patient experience by introducing a combination of interventions that can improve outcomes and coordination of care for patients. We asked project coordinator Sharon Quinn for more details:

What is the role of the LW volunteers?

Volunteers will undertake individual holistic assessments supporting patients in hospital, community settings or in the home by offering tailored support to encourage them to address and where possible self-manage their recovery.

Do your volunteers need any particular experience?

As a volunteer you will need to have excellent inter-personal and communication skills, good listening skills, empathy and a sensitive caring approach. Any volunteering time offered will be gratefully received.

If you are interested in volunteering for this new service contact the Volunteer Coordinator using the details shown below.

The Bradbury Centre, Stockton Road, Sunderland, SR2 7AQ

Phone: 0191 5141131

volunteering@ageuksunderland.org.uk

Both the Advocacy and Telephone Befriending services are now part of the **Front Door** project. Here we meet two volunteers from these services:

Alan Wright

Volunteer: Advocacy Service



Alan has been a volunteer advocate for nearly seven years. He began volunteering for age UK Sunderland after retiring and deciding he needed something fulfilling to do. After a long and busy career in the construction industry, more latterly as the director of property management for a large north east based employer, Alan still felt he had

plenty of energy and skills to share.

Typically Alan will spend one morning a week in the office dealing with the many different issues which lead people to turn to the advocacy service for support. Alan explained that certain issues come up regularly, such as energy billing queries or help with switching utility providers. Oftentimes people do not feel confident about tackling these things themselves and need support to talk to companies and get a satisfactory outcome.

Housing is another common area where older people can need the help of advocacy. Repairs, issues with tenancy agreements and even threatened evictions are all things which Alan and his fellow volunteers have dealt with many times over the years, the resolution of a problem with something as fundamental as the roof over your head can bring a massive sense relief to the client and of course a sense of a job satisfaction for the person acting as advocate.

Sometimes the greatest satisfaction can come when an older couple facing a move into care seek help so they can be kept together in the same accommodation, or in a situation where only one partner needs care, that they can be placed as near as possible to their family home as Alan explains "These are the ones that are the really good results, and you know you are making a positive difference to people's lives".

When the tasks can range from simply helping someone to complete a form correctly for one person - to investigating how the income tax system works in North America for another, Alan's advocacy volunteering is certainly never dull!

Forthcoming Safeguarding Training dates:

Monday 18th March 2019,

Bradbury Centre, 1.00pm - 3.00pm

Valerie Wiberg

Volunteer: Keeping in Touch Telephone Befriending

Valerie Wiberg is now into her tenth year of volunteering for Age UK Sunderland and is still as enthusiastic as she was at the start. Valerie first heard about the telephone befriending service at Age UK through another project in Washington. She decided to give it a go and was given a number of people to ring to get started. Quickly Valerie built up to a list of between ten and twelve older people that she rings from the office in the Bradbury Centre one morning a week.

Over the years Valerie's clients have been a mixture of females and males, as she explains "I rang one older gentleman called Mohamed for nine and a half years, we would have a time set each week when he knew I was going to call and we would have a great chat". Sadly Mohamed passed away last year. "You get to know people and they are like friends, so it is sad when someone passes away, but you have the satisfaction of knowing you were a regular part of their life and made a difference"

Some of the people Valerie rings are housebound and their days and weeks can be very lonely, consequently they love to have someone to talk to. Valerie reflects "All the people I talk to are very different and we talk about many different things. Sometimes conversations can be short and other times in-depth, but you have to be a good listener. Quite often they will tell me about their lives, the jobs they have done and it is so interesting, sometimes they are waiting for me to call so they can tell me their news. I feel as though I am always learning and it keeps my brain active! At the end of the day I'm satisfied if they sound happy and contented - it gives me a boost!"



Volunteers are currently needed for the following projects:

- Could you be the person to lead our Friday Friends group? If you are naturally sociable, enjoy discussions, arranging speakers and creating quizzes etc. we need you!
- Our Essence Service needs volunteers to help with the running of the groups at the centre and outreach groups. Contact Essence for more details: 0191 5221310
- We are looking for a leader to run a new weekly walking group, interested? For more information contact Angela Newton on the main centre number below.

Contact: volunteering@ageuksunderland.org.uk or ring **5141131**

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