

Age UK Westminster Volunteers Newsletter May 2021

MEET ONE OF OUR SERVICE COORDINATORS

I am Grace Nuttall, and I am the Volunteer Coordinator for Age UK Westminster. I have been in this role for the past 3 years, making sure that we have a regular flow of new volunteers joining the organisation to give vital support to our ever-expanding services. I also write this monthly newsletter!

We work with many volunteers from all walks of life including university students and other young people who are seeking opportunities for work placements. Also, we have volunteers from large corporate groups and always encourage older local residents to become volunteers.

We now have 260 volunteers. They offer regular befriending phone calls, visits, and food shopping. Also, digital learning support, and to be walking companions with clients. Additionally, they can give their time to our charity shop or in our office.

The last 16 months have brought challenges and experiences we could never have imagined, but thanks to our amazing team of volunteers we have emerged stronger and better prepared to continue supporting our clients.

We are always looking for more volunteers to support our services and I would encourage anyone interested in finding out more about our current volunteering opportunities to get in touch with our Volunteering Team at volunteering@acwestminster.org.uk



UPDATES

Volunteers' Week

Thank you, volunteers, you are very much appreciated!

As we begin to celebrate National Volunteers' Week, from 1st-7th June, Age UK Westminster would like to take this opportunity to say a big thank you to all of you, our volunteers for the energy and enthusiasm you continue to bring to your roles, and we thank you for the commitment and dedication you have shown in support of our charity's work in the last difficult 12 months.

You help to ease older people's loneliness, you show them that you care, you listen to them and you share the joys, sorrows, and stories of their lives. You help to ensure their safety and that they receive any help they need or are entitled to. You respect them and you become a friend they can rely on. Without you, Age UK Westminster would not be able to do the work it does, that is to improve the lives of local older people living in the borough.

We would be delighted to hear of any volunteering activities that you will be taking part in during this Volunteers' Week. Send us your photos and your stories for us to share.

Volunteers' Awards Ceremony

As we are not holding events during Volunteers' Week, we would like to take this opportunity to announce our second Volunteers' Award Ceremony which will take place on 12th August 2021. It is an event where we can all celebrate Age UK Westminster volunteers and the major role they play in the community, and where we can show our true appreciation. Put this date in your diary, it will be special.

London Landmarks Half Marathon

Are you doing the London Landmarks Half Marathon on 1st August?

If you have a ballot place, would you like to run for the Age UK Westminster team to support our work?

We'll be there to cheer you on the day!

Please contact our volunteering team at volunteering@acwestminster.org.uk

Smart Meter Awareness Raising Project - The benefits of a Smart Meter for you and for Great Britain.

Smart Meters are helping Britain save more energy and can help you to save on your bills too.

If you are 50 or over and would like more information or to speak to someone about how a Smart Meter would benefit you, please contact Age UK Westminster on 0203 0045610 or email enquiries@ageukwestminster.org.uk. More details can also be found on our website at <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/westminster/our-services/the-benefits-of-a-smart-meter/>

Ending your Befriending Relationship

Volunteers wanting to end a befriending relationship with a client need to be aware of certain factors. A client can be badly affected if the befriending relationship comes to an end abruptly. It can leave the client lonelier and more isolated than before. It means then that we at Age UK Westminster have to find another suitable volunteer who can give the client the friendship and reassurance they need.

If you want to end your befriending role, we ask that you give us as much notice as possible so that we can ensure the client you have befriended is rematched and supported quickly. This is essential for the safety and wellbeing of our vulnerable clients.

If you find you must have a break from your volunteering role due to unforeseen circumstances such as family or personal reasons you must inform us as soon as possible in order that we can maintain contact with the client to ensure their continued wellbeing.

We at Age UK Westminster can offer you any support and advice you may require. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any concerns about your clients and your befriending role.

VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES



Befriending Visits Volunteers

We are actively looking for Befriending Volunteers who would enjoy meeting clients either in their homes or at an agreed accessible outdoor space. Ideally, each visit would be for 1-2 hours, once a week.

If you are interested, please visit our website at <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/westminster/get-involved/volunteering/> for more information.

Digital Champion Volunteers

Are you familiar with the use of digital technology?

Do you have what it takes to help someone who is not so familiar with technology to build their confidence and to take that first step that they need to get online? If so, our Digital Champion's role could be the one for you.

We are particularly keen to hear from young people (aged 18 to 24) who can offer training support to older people wishing to learn how use digital technology more effectively.

For more information, please contact our Volunteering Team at volunteering@acwestminster.org.uk.

Ad-hoc volunteering opportunities

The following roles would suit anyone looking to give something back to the community without the need for regular commitment.



Grocery Shopping Help Volunteer

Although restriction have been eased, many of our vulnerable service users across the borough still rely on volunteers to assist them with their regular grocery shopping. Age UK Westminster provide a shopping service for those who need help, but we could not manage without the support of our volunteers. If you can occasionally spare a few hours to shop for someone living in your local neighbourhood, please get in touch. You can find more information by clicking <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/westminster/get-involved/volunteering/shopping-service-and-food-parcel-delivery-volunteer/>

Help with Distributing leaflets

We are looking for volunteers with spare time during the day to assist with the distribution of our leaflets within the borough. If you are interested, please contact our office on the number below.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

The following free e-Learning courses are available to our existing volunteers through Grey Matter Learning.

Safeguarding Adult

<https://content.greymatterlearning.co.uk/docs/Course+description+pdf/Safeguarding+Adults+Course+PDF+.pdf>

Dementia Awareness <https://greymatterlearning.co.uk/social-care-courses/dementia-awareness/>

Infection Prevention and Control <https://greymatterlearning.co.uk/social-care-courses/infection-prevention-control/>

If you would like to take any of these courses, please register your interest by emailing. grace.nuttall@ageukwestminster.org.uk

VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH

Congratulations to Laura for becoming our May's Volunteer of the Month!

"I was devastated after losing both of my grannies in the space of 2 weeks. I was really close to both of them, and I decided from then that I wanted to do something meaningful for the elderly in my free time."



Laura has been a befriender to a 92-year-old resident since they were matched at the end of 2019. Her friend has a dementia illness, and she has grown to rely on Laura for support over the years. The two have built a great relationship. Laura checks on her friend both face-to-face and by telephone a few times a week to make sure that she is coping well. She does her shopping and has delivered food parcels for her and her neighbours on numerous occasions.

VOLUNTEER STORY

The following story is from one of our volunteers who has been supporting a client for a few years, through the Befriending Project:

"I first started volunteering with Age Concern, as it was then, about fifteen years ago when undergoing postgraduate study at Oxford. I helped out at a new day centre that had just been set up doing anything and everything that was asked of me and I thoroughly enjoyed it! A few years later, after volunteering with other organisations, I decided to approach Age Concern Westminster to see how I could be of use. I started out helping with their fundraising strategy and thinking about how to increase corporate donations. When Age UK and Age Concern merged, I thought about volunteering in a more personal manner and decided the befriending programme would be something I would enjoy.

I was introduced to my client, about three years ago, and we have become good friends. Pre-Covid-19, I visited her in her home once a week to chat and assist with shopping and trips to the hairdresser. I also chatted to her a couple of times on the phone each week and have got to know all about her, her family and interests. With the arrival of Covid-19, all meetings have sadly stopped but we chat on the phone and sometimes on FaceTime a few times each week. I have met some of her family members and look forward to talking to her each week. At times when she is finding life difficult (particularly during the lockdowns), it is far from easy, but I am able to listen even if there is nothing else, I can do, and that in itself is a help. I am a passionate advocate for volunteering and think there should be a national volunteering programme for young people. My parents have always volunteered, and I started volunteering when I was sixteen years old helping in a primary school. I can honestly say that I have gotten so much more out of it than I could have believed possible and learnt skills I have used in all other areas of my life.

We are all very busy and swept up in our own lives and concerns but taking some time out to help others gives clarity of mind, contentment, and a feeling of fulfilment like few other things. My professional life requires very different skills to my volunteering, and I enjoy the contrast of the two."

We'd love to hear your volunteering stories and to be able to share them across our social media, website and publications. Please let us know if you are interested in sharing your story.

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