



Volunteer



STORIES

#Giving
Back

Caring



Learn
something new
every day



Laugh

*"We can do no great things.
We can only do small things
with great love."
- Mother Theresa*

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introduction

I am proud to launch the first collection of Carers Leeds volunteer stories.

This wonderful gathering of real experiences shows the variety of incredible people we are fortunate to have by our side whilst we deliver vital support to carers in our city.

Our volunteers are integral to our service and we wouldn't be able to run the range and diversity of services that we do offer if it weren't for these wonderful people.

I am always humbled to hear about everything the volunteers gain from being part of Carers Leeds and here you will read about the stories of friendship, giving back and deep respect for other carers.

All of this really does help us identify that volunteering is a two way street, and one that benefits all involved.

Thanks to everyone who has given their story.....now read on.

Val Hewison

CEO

Brian's Story

Why/When did you start volunteering?

I have been volunteering for many years.

What volunteering activities do you do?

At Carers Leeds filling envelopes and for other organisations driving a mini-bus.

What do you enjoy most about volunteering?

My main enjoyment has been driving mini-buses.

My Story

All sorts of things can happen when you drive a mini-bus. Once we were in Whitby with a group of carers. We had just started to drive back to Leeds when a clutch wire broke. I managed to get back to Whitby and after a few tries, one of the local hotels agreed to let the carers stay in the warmth until another mini-bus came out from Leeds. We finally got everyone to their home, tired and very late!

Sometimes when you volunteer it can be upsetting. For several years I delivered 'meals on wheels'. You get to know every aspect of this great city of ours. I remember many of the folk who enjoyed the meal. One lady who lived alone on one of the large council estates, said to me one day "Brian, the last person I saw was you, a week ago". That upset me. What was equally upsetting was driving, accompanied by nurses, discharged patients from various hospitals to their homes. I clearly remember driving a very old man to his flat in South Leeds. There was no one to welcome him, no heating and the fridge was empty. All the time we could spend with him was used to get some heating 'On' and get to the nearest shop to buy a few basics – milk, bread etc.

A happier story involved a group of disabled children on a week's holiday near Castle Howard. On this particular day they all wanted to see the famous Middlesbrough Swing Bridge. It didn't open until 10am so they go more and more excited. They loved the actual 'Ride' – in fact so much I asked the Bridge Engineer if we could go back. Like so many people you meet, such kind people, the Bridge Master said not only could we ride back, we could cross on the bridge "As many times as they wanted". I lost count of how many times we crossed! There are lots more stories I could tell

Christine's Story

Why/when did you start volunteering?

I started volunteering at the beginning of 2011. I had given up work to care for various family members some years before and felt that I had more time to spare. Having been a carer myself I knew how important Carers Leeds is.

What volunteering activities do you do?

Reception Volunteer, Focus and Advisory Group.

What do you enjoy about volunteering?

I enjoy the varied nature of reception work, the office is always busy and no two days are the same. I feel that I am supporting a worthwhile organisation which gives vital support to carers.

My Story

Having been a carer myself for over 17 years I wanted to support Carers Leeds. I feel that I am valued and using the skills that I have as well as learning new skills all the time. I contacted Carers Leeds and asked if they ever needed someone to make cups of tea. I find I am doing a lot more than that on reception, although I think that the cups of tea are always appreciated!



CARERS
LEEDS
MY
CUP OF
TEA

Diana's story

Why did you start volunteering?

I needed to repay the support received when my husband was ill with dementia. I got advice, relaxing treatments and funding towards a much needed rest! After my husband passed on, I started volunteering in 2008.

What volunteering activities do you?

I volunteer to fill envelopes with the carers newsletter.

What do you enjoy about volunteering

I thoroughly enjoy meeting up with the other likeminded "envelope stuffers", chatting, putting the world to rights and savouring the delicious energy-giving refreshments so kindly provided by Carers Leeds. I'm grateful to be able to contribute in a small way to the vital work, in all its channels, of this great, amazing and wonderful organisation. I enjoy the essence of humanity, the understanding, the empathy, the passion of all the people involved in this vital work!

My Story

I got in touch with Carers Leeds in 2003/4 after my husband was diagnosed with PICKS disease, a form of dementia. This was through the yellow card scheme I saw in my GP's surgery – excellent scheme! I received vital advice, support and practical help in dealing with this scary, tiring situation as I was still working. I was able to access foot massage, info/support sessions and receive a grant to enable me to take a well-earned break from caring.

After losing my husband in January 2008, I was requested to fly to Australia to help my daughter who was expecting her second child. After 2 months, I returned to pick up my life again and to help Carers Leeds as well as help establish a tenants and residents group in Rawdon: Billing View Community Group, set up to provide health, educational and social activities in our community centre.

Initially I thought I could cope on Reception at Carers Leeds but Val recognised I needed longer to recover from my bereavement. I then joined the "stuffing envelopes with Newsletters" team, where I've continued to both help and enjoy company of like-minded volunteers.

Dianne's story

Why did you start volunteering?

Not sure – I started using Carers Leeds in 2000. I had my first major problem in late 2003/2004. I think it was around 2005 I started volunteering as a kind of 'payback'.

What volunteering activities do you?

Envelope work, fairs/information sessions and project work e.g. 'Call Cos You Care'.

What do you enjoy about volunteering?

Difficult one – possibly the friendships I've made, plus I've learnt a lot about me.

My Story

One of favourite Carers Leeds events was always the summer fayres.

Due to bereavement I missed the 2013 fayre. But I was back volunteering at the 2014 event.

The weather was abysmal, rainy with hale and blustery wind. Thankfully most of the event could be held inside St Chad's parish hall and the weather did not put people off coming.

I had a whale of a time looking after the 'name the teddy' stall. I can't remember its actual name or how much the stall raised but Ted and I became great friends.

The whole event was made extra special as it was to be opened by Sam Dingle, of 'Emmerdale' fame (otherwise known as the actor James Hooton.)

I don't watch Emmerdale, but knew that Sam was a loveable rogue. What I found was that James was nothing like his character, so intelligent and funny.

His wife and daughter also attended and I would like to think they all had a good time.



GoodTimes

Induben's Story

Why/When did you start volunteering?

I started volunteering at Carers Leeds 2/3 years ago and have endeavoured with volunteering for around 15 years. I really love to help people and learn new things fundamentally. It really brings the community together, by helping others you help yourself.

What volunteering activities do you do?

I provide a lot of help at the group events as well as speaking with both the young and elderly.

What do you most enjoy about volunteering?

I love and thoroughly enjoy speaking to new people, hearing their stories and learning so many new things. It really opens your eyes to the world and it gives me so much happiness to be able to help others.

My Story

I came to England in 1968, with my life to build and not much family here. I worked multiple jobs but as I think back groups like carers would have made such an impact on the integrating of the community. I began volunteering at the blind people's society and spent so much time with the elderly and really built such amazing relations, I would cook traditional food for them. Thereafter I began working with many charities combined with Leeds Hindu Temple. I believe that people should learn about other food, cultures, fashions and traditions. I loved seeing the sheer excitement of when I dressed many people in Indian sari attire. Volunteering brings our cultures together and binds our community.

**We have far more in
common than that
divides us.**

Jo Cox MP

Joan's story

Why/when did you start volunteering?

18 years ago.

What volunteering activities do you do?

Envelope Stuffing!

What do you enjoy most about volunteering?

Being involved with Carers Leeds.

My Story

During my life I have, like most people, had some spectacularly good luck, and some very bad luck and lots in between. The very bad luck was when I first encountered Carers Leeds. My lovely husband could no longer be looked after at home and would have to go into care. The good luck came when I was looking for a good care home and someone told me Carers kept reports. The day I first came to Carers I met a lovely lady who talked to me, as I mopped my tears. She said, maybe I would have more time soon and why didn't I help with the envelope stuffing. It may seem a small thing but it led to meeting some lovely people of whom some are now life-long friends. I have done different things at Carers, but now I still do the envelopes and look forward to meeting other volunteers bi-monthly. We are always made to feel valued.

Friendship 

Josie's story

Why/When did you start volunteering?

I started volunteering at Carers Leeds in 2008 to fill a big gap.

What volunteering activities do you do?

Reception volunteer.

What do you enjoy most about volunteering?

The people at Carers Leeds.

My Story

After my husband died in 2007 I had lost a lot of my outside family contacts due to 24 hour caring. In March/April the following year I rang to cancel Carers News and was invited to the Moving on Group. After a couple of really good outings Karen who was at that time a support worker, asked if I would consider reception duties.

I have always worked with people and enjoyed the variety so I agreed we would give it a trial. 8 years later the trial still goes on.

The help I received in my first few months was so good I was even able to lose 2 stone with everyone's encouragement. I am sure I get more out of my role than I give. Long may it continue!



Lena's story

Why/When did you start volunteering?

I started in 1996. I was asked to help out a new group starting in Leeds, to help with people needing advice and help caring for a family member with mental and physical disabilities. This group is now Carers Leeds.

What volunteering do you do?

Well I have gone through most of them roles at Carers Leeds and now its envelope filling.

What do you enjoy most about volunteering?

Meeting people and comparing the different way people manage to get through, sometimes a very traumatic day.

My Story

This goes back many years, I was asked if I would care for a baby who had been left near Woodhouse Moor, where the office for Care of Children was, so I took him home with me. The same week I was asked to care for a boy and girl 7-9 whose mum was ill. For a number of years they kept in touch.



Margaret's story

Why/when did you start volunteering?

Being a past carer, I felt I could use my own experience to help and understand others going through a similar situation that is why I joined Carers Leeds as a volunteer. I started volunteering in January 2007.

What volunteering activities do you do?

The volunteering activities that I do are quite varied. I am in the Reception Office, helping with the day to day administrative tasks. Answering the telephone, meeting and greeting visitors, making sure they are made to feel welcome on arrival. Sending letters and keeping track of the Wellbeing database.

What do you enjoy most about volunteering?

The most enjoyable aspect of my volunteering role is the variety of people I am in contact with, also working with a team of people who are dedicated and passionate about what they do. My volunteering role challenges me as an individual to be the best I can be.

My Story

I started looking at volunteer work not long after my caring role had ended. I had little knowledge of Carers Leeds, and what the organisation was about. I called into the office and enquired about volunteering and was given a form to complete. I decided I would like to put my time to good use and be involved with an organisation that helped with the needs of the unpaid carer.

Volunteering has increased my self-confidence. I am also learning to meet new challenges in a supportive environment.

I come away from Carers Leeds feeling I have contributed to a cause I really care about, that is down to the professional people that are Carers Leeds.



Mark's story

Why/When did you start volunteering

I can't remember the date but probably 3 years or so.

What volunteering activities do you do

I volunteer at CAB, now qualified as a Gateway Assessor in supporting legal advice. At Carers Leeds providing informal support for carers.

What do you enjoy most about volunteering

Helping people whilst keeping occupied myself, doing something interesting and worthwhile.

My Story

I've been a single parent for 26 years with my disabled son but physically unable to carry on my job, tied in with hours I need for my son. I needed to do something. I enjoy helping people and hopefully it will lead to paid employment somewhere.

I enjoy hearing the change in a carers voice, when they are more upbeat after talking. This applies to more than one.



Maureen's Story

Why/When did you start volunteering?

I started volunteering late December 1995. I had been into carers centre for some advice due to my circumstances changing. I was given plenty of support and advice that I needed, made to feel that not only been listened to but made to feel that I was valued not only as a person but as a carer. As I was given so much help and advice when I was asked to volunteer I agreed, as I felt your service so valuable. I wanted to put something back as well as hopefully helping other carers.

What volunteering activities do you do?

First started helping in café for carers then onto Envelope stuffing.

What do you enjoy most about volunteering?

Being able to give something back in return for help I had received and talking to other carers in the same position as myself. Feel part of a team. As we are putting newsletters in envelopes we have a good natter, laugh and put the world to rights. Nice tea, cake and sandwich at dinnertime. Enjoy meeting others.

My Story

I had not long been coming into Carers Centre as a carer. I was asked if I would mind coming in as a volunteer to help with the Carers Café which I did and enjoyed very much. In those days we would make sandwiches ourselves. This gave me a chance to get to know other carers, all in the same boat as myself. I often felt isolated as a lot of carers do. Then I got involved with filling envelopes for newsletter. This I also enjoy. I feel as a volunteer, I am able to give something back and help others in the same way as I got help.



#Giving
Back

Patricia's story

Why/When did you start volunteering?

I started volunteering at Carers Leeds in February 2012.

What volunteering activities to you do?

The filling of the newsletter into the envelopes for posting.

What do you enjoy most about volunteering?

It gives me purpose, I enjoy the company. It makes me feel worthwhile and I get a lot back from giving back.

My Story

I was told about Carers Leeds by a friend when I needed help for Mum. She was diagnosed with Dementia. They were so helpful with form filling that I couldn't manage myself. I came to realise what a wonderful professional organisation Carers Leeds were, and are, and I said as soon as I had some time to spare I would like to volunteer for them. The staff are wonderful and seem happy as a team and they look after the volunteers so well. I feel safe and very much appreciated for the little help I give them and would to give more.

Managed by Val Hewison who is just a one off, you can just tell how caring she is. If I was a lot younger I would be proud to work for such a wonderful lady.



Paul's Story

Why/When did you start volunteering?

I started volunteering at Carers Leeds in July 2008.

What volunteering activities do you do?

Envelope filling.

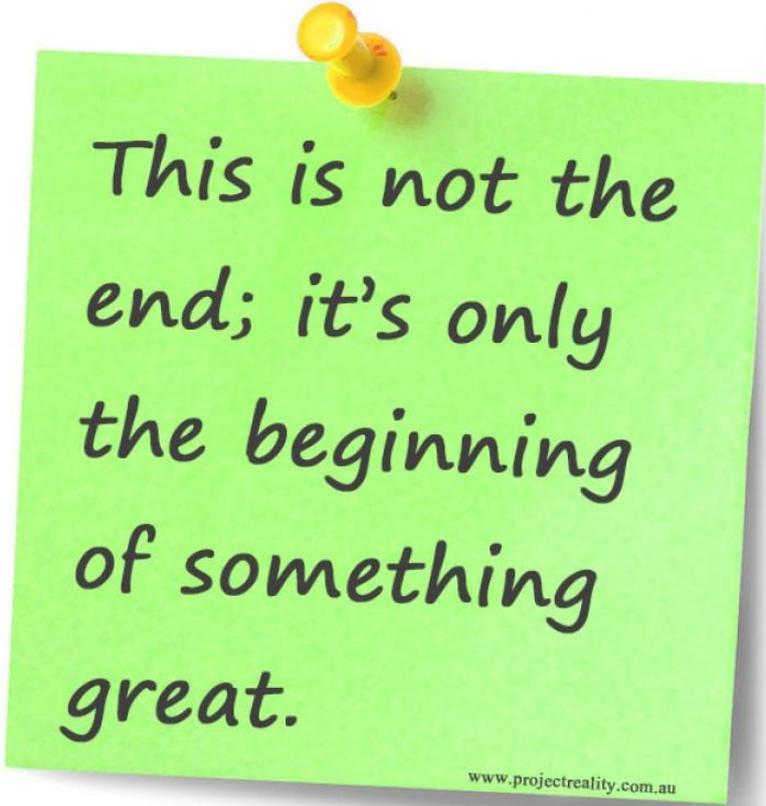
What do you enjoy most about volunteering?

Seeing the staff and my fellow volunteers. We have such a laugh (not forgetting the lunch).

My Story

My Practice Nurse said I should register with Carers Leeds and I was invited to a welcome session held by Val Hewison at that time. Val asked for volunteers. So I have put back what Carers Leeds has helped us with over the years. A way of saying Thank You and have enjoyed every minute.





*This is not the
end; it's only
the beginning
of something
great.*

www.projectreality.com.au