

# Volunteers' News Summer 2025

Volunteers'  
Week &  
Carers' Week  
Special  
Edition



**HAPPY  
VOLUNTEERS'  
WEEK**

# Happy Volunteers' and Carers' Week

Valerie, Volunteer Co-ordinator/  
News Editor



Hello Volunteers,

Welcome to our special Volunteers' Week and Carers' Week edition — a celebration of the people at the core of Carers Leeds: our amazing volunteers and unpaid carers.

We're proud to share that Carers Leeds has been awarded the 'Excellence in Volunteering' quality mark — a recognition of our ongoing work to make volunteering supportive, inclusive and meaningful.

In Volunteer Voices, we explore how volunteers are helping shape the future of volunteering at Carers Leeds. We also bring you a moment of pride from the Carers Trust Conference, where our CEO Claire presented a poster about our volunteer programme.

You'll hear from Sue, who generously shared her story of volunteering, and we've included a list of summer event dates so you can connect with others, or simply come along for a bit of fun and relaxation.

We're also introducing two members of staff — Alice and Ian — who are passionate about improving support for carers, and they share a little about their work. Finally, we highlight the ongoing 'My Carer's Story' project — a growing collection of honest, personal stories from carers that help others feel seen and understood.

To every volunteer - thank you. Your time, compassion and skills make a difference every single day. This week - and every week - we celebrate you. With gratitude from all of us at Carers Leeds. ❤️

Warmest wishes, Valerie



*"Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in."*

*-Author Unknown*



# Thank you

## Carers Leeds Volunteers

#VolunteersWeek

**Valerie Banks** Volunteer Programme Co-ordinator/News Editor

**Thank You** to our volunteer proofreaders Christine, Irene and Ruth. And to our contributors Alice, Ian and Sue.

If you have any ideas for content, please email Valerie, Volunteer Coordinator ([valerie.banks@carersleeds.org.uk](mailto:valerie.banks@carersleeds.org.uk)) or give her a call (07985 754 570)



# The Value of Volunteering

Volunteering is a vital component of UK society, with millions contributing their time and skills annually across Scotland, Wales, England and Northern Ireland. These inspiring statistics highlight the incredible contributions of volunteers and the potential for even greater engagement across the UK.



**14.2 million people in the UK have formally volunteered at least once a month**



**Volunteering added £4.6 billion in productivity gains to the UK economy in 2024**



**25 million people in the UK volunteered informally at least once in the year**

These statistics highlight the remarkable contributions of volunteers across the UK. Together, with support from organisations like you, we can continue to grow the impact of volunteering and create stronger, more connected communities.

The above figures are provided by [Royal Voluntary Service](#) and [NCVO](#).

## Past Volunteers' Week highlights

Every year, Volunteers' Week is celebrated across the UK in many different ways. It's inspiring to see more people, organisations, and groups participate each year and celebrate their amazing volunteers and the volunteering community. Check out some of the highlights from last year below.

More than

**2.5**

**BILLION**

people reached across press and comms channels

Over

**525**

**THOUSAND**

people reached on social media

More than

**385**

**THOUSAND**

subscribers engaged





**Carers Leeds Long Service Award**

**THANK YOU**

**Christine (5yrs), Evrim (5yrs),  
Jane M (5yrs), Margaret (5yrs)**

**Thank you for 20 years combined service!**

**Your commitment and contribution as a  
volunteer really makes a difference**

**Presented on: Volunteers Week 2025**

**From: Carers Leeds**



**#VolunteersWeek**

# Celebrating Excellence: Leeds Volunteering Quality Mark Awarded to Carers Leeds



*This Volunteers' Week, we're delighted to share some exciting news: Carers Leeds has been awarded the 'Excellence in Volunteering' quality mark by Leeds Volunteer Managers' Network.*

This achievement reflects the care, dedication, and positive culture that has grown throughout our volunteer programme.

The quality mark is a local standard that celebrates organisations that offer a high-quality and well-managed volunteering experience. Developed by Voluntary Action Leeds (VAL) and the Leeds Volunteer Managers Network, the award recognises that Carers Leeds meets the standards set out in the Compact for Leeds and follows best practice in how we support, train, and value our volunteers.

While we are proud to have achieved the national quality standard 'Investing in Volunteers' in place, achieving this local recognition is especially meaningful.

It demonstrates our commitment to the Leeds community alongside other organisations who are working hard to create the best possible volunteering experiences.

This Volunteers' Week, we're not just celebrating an award – we're celebrating you. Every trustee, every staff member, every volunteer who has helped shape our programme. Every person who's offered their time, shared their ideas, and made space for others. This is your achievement. This is our team success.

**Thank you – and here's to everything we've built together, and everything still to come.**

*"This is an exceptional quality mark submission...There is a whole organisation approach to including volunteers and clearly a positive culture around volunteer involvement."*

*Andrina Dawson, Volunteering and Capacity Building Manager*



Excellence in Volunteering

This Quality Mark Level One certificate is awarded to:

**CAREERS LEEDS**

Who have demonstrated that their  
volunteering programme is delivered to a  
high standard of practice.

Signed on behalf of  
Voluntary Action Leeds:

Date:

**13 MAY 2025**



# Volunteer Voices: Exploring Volunteer Participation at Carers Leeds

by Valerie, Volunteer Coordinator



At Carers Leeds, volunteers already tell us they feel listened to — and that's something we're proud of. But in line with our '[Vision for Volunteering](#)', we're now asking a deeper question: how can we go further and empower volunteers to take a leading role in shaping our volunteer programme?

This Volunteers' Week, we're highlighting a key step in that journey — recent conversations with volunteers about strengthening their role in leadership and decision-making.

In March, we invited volunteers to explore the idea of setting up a Volunteer Forum. This wouldn't just be a space to talk, but a space to collaborate, influence, and lead. We hosted two group discussions in March — one in person and one online — along with a 1:1 phone conversation. In total, nine volunteers took part.

As the discussions unfolded, the idea of a Volunteer Forum sparked a wider conversation.

Volunteers helped us realise that this wasn't only about one structure — it was about exploring a range of ways volunteers can participate in shaping the volunteer programme.

Since then, we've started to explore a broader range of participation models, learning from both local and national organisations about how they involve volunteers in decision-making. We're also looking inward — reflecting on how decisions are currently made across Carers Leeds.

Why does this matter? Because volunteers are not just supporters — they're leaders, thinkers, and changemakers. Their lived experience brings value, insight, and direction. When we share power and build together, we grow stronger as an organisation and as a community.

**This is just the beginning — and the conversation continues on Monday 16 June, 10:30 AM–12:00 PM. All volunteers are welcome! To join, contact Valerie or Gayle.**

# SUMMER EVENTS FOR VOLUNTEERS

SAVE THE DATES!



## PRIDE PARADE

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- Sunday 20 July
- Time to be confirmed
- Bring a friend, family or partner

## ASK CLAIRE

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- Tuesday 22 July 11am-12pm
- Carers Leeds and Zoom
- Ask Claire, CEO, a burning question, raise an issue or offer an idea



## VOLUNTEER PICNIC

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- Wednesday 13 August
- 12pm-2pm
- Kirkstall Abbey
- Bring a friend, family, partner or pet

Thank You  
for sharing  
Your Story

# Say Hello to Sue

## Nine Years, Seven Roles: A Story of Compassion and Commitment



In 2015, I retired from full-time work. At the time, I was also looking after my elderly mum and supporting my brother. I didn't know anything about Carers Leeds—and I certainly wouldn't have thought of myself as a carer. A chance conversation at a colleague's leaving party changed that. I met Val Hewison, the former CEO of Carers Leeds, and that brief chat started me on a path I never expected.

Volunteering began as a small step—to help out where I could. I never imagined how much it would become part of my life. Over the past nine years, I've taken on seven different roles, met amazing people, learned a lot, and enjoyed many different opportunities.

My first role, which I still do today, was as a Reception/Admin Volunteer. From greeting visitors to answering calls and helping with admin tasks. A key part of our role in the admin team is to give carers a warm

welcome — in person or by phone — making sure every contact feels friendly and reassuring.

Over time, I found myself wanting to do more. I became a Support Group Assistant for a dementia carers group —helping to set up the space, welcome carers, and support the smooth running of the group. This led into Befriending, being matched with carers who were feeling isolated, and then into Keeping in Touch calls during lockdown, working closely with the dementia team to check in on carers and offer a listening ear.

Following this, I helped pilot the role of Evaluation Caller, speaking to carers after they'd received support to gather feedback. Even small interactions can have a big impact.

One of the most enjoyable roles I've taken on is Carers Book Group Facilitator. I've always loved reading —books have been a constant source of comfort, escape, and inspiration throughout my life. Being able to share that passion with carers has been incredibly rewarding.



The group is more than just a book discussion; it's a space where carers can unwind, connect, and feel like themselves for an hour or two. Whether we're talking about a gripping novel or just chatting about life, it's about having a moment to breathe and enjoy something together. I co-facilitate the group with another volunteer, and we aim to keep it relaxed and inclusive. Seeing the group evolve into a little community has been one of the real highlights of my volunteering journey.

More recently, I became a Welcome Volunteer, meeting new staff and volunteers, helping them get to know about the volunteer programme at Carers Leeds—and it's been great for me to get to know them too.

Throughout all of this, I've always appreciated that there's no pressure. Volunteers are encouraged to say yes to opportunities when it feels right, and no when it doesn't.

That flexibility has made it easy to stay involved in a way that suits me. In every role, I've felt supported, cared about, and valued.

Volunteering has given me purpose, structure, and friendship. Nine years later, I'm still glad I said yes. And during Volunteers Week, I'm really looking forward to spending time with fellow volunteers and staff at the Volunteers Thank You Lunch—a lovely way to celebrate what we've all been part of.

*Sue, you are like a good book – full of heart, depth, and the power to make a lasting impact. Thank you for dedicating your time to supporting carers over the past nine years. Your experience shows how volunteering can grow over time, offer purpose, connection, and the freedom to get involved in ways that feel right for you.*



## Celebrating Volunteering on a National Stage



We were thrilled that Claire, our CEO, was invited to create a poster celebrating our volunteer programme for this year's Carers Trust Conference! The poster was displayed at the event and featured in the lively World Café session, where attendees explored ideas, shared learning,

and connected with colleagues from across the network. Claire had a fantastic opportunity to showcase the energy, creativity, and commitment of our volunteers — and to share how we're putting our Vision for Volunteering into action. See the poster on the next page.



# Volunteers at the heart of Carers Leeds



**Volunteering is at the heart of our organisation, guided by a Vision for Volunteering and key roles and structures. We have a Lead Trustee for Volunteering, a Volunteer Management Working Group and a Volunteer Programme Coordinator. Volunteers join staff in meetings and 'Ask the CEO' sessions.**

We have volunteering roles across most areas of our work. These include admin and reception, Befrienders, Keeping in Touch Callers, and Carer Support Group Assistants.

With ongoing training, supervision, and regular feedback, we ensure volunteers feel equipped, valued, and included. We also hold celebration and thank you events.

## Why we include volunteers

The benefits to Carers Leeds include:

- **Increasing resources**

Volunteers improve and broaden the range of services that Carers Leeds can offer.

- **Diversity**

Volunteers can help to increase the range of skills, interests, life experiences and cultural backgrounds within our team.

- **Community involvement**

Volunteering is a way of involving the community we serve and is a valuable way of promoting our work with carers.

## How we do it

- **Investing in staff** – This includes the Volunteer Programme Coordinator, Befriending Coordinator, and Volunteer Supervisors, who are vital in providing the necessary training, guidance, and support to volunteers.

- **A Volunteer Management Working Group** – A diverse group that includes a Lead Trustee for Volunteers, Senior Managers, Operational Managers, and Volunteer Coordinators working together to ensure the volunteer programme is aligned with organisational goals and supported at every level.

- **A 'One Team' approach** – A collaborative environment where staff and volunteers work together to benefit carers, recognising volunteers as an essential and valued part of the team.

Volunteers report feeling valued, supported, and empowered in their roles, with annual feedback surveys showing high satisfaction levels. We have several longstanding volunteers.

“Overall, I love being a volunteer with Carers Leeds. My confidence and self-esteem is improved.”

Volunteer

Volunteering has been integrated into all levels of the organisation, from team meetings to Board meetings.

“It's great to see how the whole organisation is committed to involving volunteers.”

Lead Trustee for Volunteers

Carers Leeds continues to expand its volunteer roles, providing a broad range of opportunities for individuals to contribute and make a difference.

“I feel that we make a difference to those people who are caring for others, often in difficult circumstances.”

Volunteer

We have achieved the Investing in Volunteers Quality Mark three times,

which demonstrates a commitment to the continuous improvement and recognition of the volunteer programme's high standards.



**For more information contact:**

**Valerie Banks**, Volunteer Programme Coordinator  
[Valerie.Banks@carersleeds.org.uk](mailto:Valerie.Banks@carersleeds.org.uk)



# About Carers' Week



Carers Week 9 – 15 June 2025

Carers' Week is an annual campaign to raise awareness of caring, highlight the challenges unpaid carers face, and recognise the contribution they make to families and communities throughout the UK.

The new theme for 2025, is 'Caring About Equality' This theme focuses on the inequalities faced by unpaid carers in the UK. This theme highlights issues like the risk of poverty, social isolation, and poor physical and mental health for carers.

Carers' Week is led by Carers UK, with the support of a number of other charities. Find out more on the Carers Week website [www.carersweek.org](http://www.carersweek.org)

This year, we've invited two staff members, Alice and Ian, who play key roles in enhancing support for carers, to introduce themselves and share insights about their work. We also take a closer look at the ongoing project, 'My Carer's Story.'



## The State of Unpaid Caring in Leeds

Download our Annual Survey 2024 findings [here](#) or ask your Volunteer Supervisor for a printed copy



# Meet Alice, Digital Inclusion Worker

Supporting you to use your phones and tablets  
and get online



Nowadays, it feels as though being online has become compulsory. It divides society and leaves millions unable to access services and stay connected with friends and family, whilst having to pay more for products and household bills.

I work at Carers Leeds to support carers, volunteers and staff to gain confidence being online, and close the digital divide. Friends, family and carers give so much to the people they care for and often prioritise other's needs above their own.

Having digital skills and confidence gives you equal access to information and can help you save money. It can also be a lot of fun! For example, it's great talking to people by video call or listening to a podcast.

Using a smartphone or tablet confidently opens your world to new ideas, places and activities. I like finding what people love doing offline and integrating that with digital ideas so that it is a joy to be online. It doesn't have to be scary! My favourite phone app is Merlin, which listens to bird song and identifies it.

Many carers have their own health concerns which can make it harder to

use digital devices. We can look at accessibility settings such as font size and colour, or use online sites such as [goblin.tools](https://goblin.tools), a set of tools which has been made for neurodivergent people.

Caring About Equality is woven into many areas of my life. I facilitate educational groups for people who care for someone with complex emotional needs; I am part of a land access group to ensure nature is accessible to everyone; I organise events with people with accessibility needs so that inclusion is built from the start and not as an afterthought; I take part in creative assemblies and working groups such as community housing for LGBTQ+ people, women's safety and accessible transport in cities.

So much of this is possible because of access to the internet, finding out about groups and events and being able to connect with people online so we can discuss ideas and make plans. The internet has given many carers and friends that I know access to the things that they're passionate about and the things that they need.

**Contact me if you'd like any digital support on 07311 316638 or email [alice.holland@carersleeds.org.uk](mailto:alice.holland@carersleeds.org.uk)**



# Carers Week 2025

**Discover our full line-up of events,  
learning sessions, and wellbeing  
activities for Carers Week 2025.**

👉 Visit [carersleeds.org.uk/carersweek2025](https://carersleeds.org.uk/carersweek2025)  
to find out more and get involved!

# Meet Ian, Carers Assessment and Liaison

Improving recognition of and support for  
unpaid carers



Hello everyone! I joined Carers Leeds in September 2024 after taking early retirement from my previous role within Leeds City Council. My new role is about looking after referrals for carers assessments from Carers Leeds to Adult Social Care and working with staff in Adult Social Care to ensure that we are taking a shared and equal responsibility for improving the recognition of, and support for unpaid carers, including carers assessment.

I've been busy since landing at Carers Leeds, and I'm delighted that in the last six months we have:

- **Introduced new carer awareness training which can be delivered to any team or organisation who want to know more about carers and caring**
- **Introduced new 'Assessing and Supporting Carers' training for social work staff who undertake (or are likely to undertake) carers assessment**
- **Strengthened the Social Work Carer Champion Network - Carer Champions provide a vital role in the Adults and Health Directorate by promoting good practice and influencing the way that unpaid carers are identified and supported in social care.**

- **Updated guidance to improve practice in relation to carers assessment referrals from Carers Leeds to Adult Social Care**
- **Introduced a new Practitioners Guide to promote awareness of unpaid carers and their rights, share key messages and practical steps, and provide information and links to local and national support for carers**

I really enjoyed having a 'Welcome Conversation' with volunteer Dianne back in October. I know from my previous job that volunteers are such an important part of making Carers Leeds the brilliant organisation that it is, and I hope I might meet a few more of you over the coming months.

Away from work I've been married to Sue for 29 years and we have three adult children. I'm a local preacher in the Methodist Church, and I volunteer at our Monthly Friends Café and Soup Bowl (aimed at older people, carers, and people living with dementia), and our Friday Night Youth Group.

I love most sports, particularly football (Leeds United of course), cricket, and rugby league. Although I don't make new year resolutions, I did set out to read more in 2025 and I'm happy to say it's going quite well!



# My Carer's Story: A Collection of Carer Stories



To close this edition, we return to 'My Carer's Story' — a project introduced last year by Project Coordinator Juliet Prager. Juliet shared her belief that hearing from others in similar situations can ease the loneliness many carers feel.

Since then, Juliet has been working closely with carers from across Leeds to collect their stories and build a library of real-life experiences. These stories shine a light on the realities of unpaid caring – the challenges, the

*resilience, the love, and the learning.*

*If you type 'My Carer's Story' into the search bar on our [website](#), you'll find a growing collection of these personal accounts.*

*We're proud to share the many honest and moving stories. My Carer's Story is an ongoing project by Carers Leeds to capture the stories of unpaid carers across our city. If you'd like to share your experience, please email Juliet. [juliet.prager@carersleeds.org.uk](mailto:juliet.prager@carersleeds.org.uk)*



## Campaigns To Improve the Lives of Carers'

[Carers UK](#) is working on a range of national campaigns that aim to improve the lives of carers. Ongoing campaigns include:

Disability and health benefit cuts - Working to end carer poverty - The NHS 10-year plan: Have your say - Making caring the 10th protected characteristic - Rights to Carer's Leave

**If you're interested in finding out more, you can visit the [Carers UK Campaigns page](#). Understanding what's happening and knowing your rights can be powerful in itself.**



## Carers Leeds

Mill 6, Ground Floor One  
Mabgate Mills,  
LS9 7DZ

Scan to  
subscribe to  
our newsletter



## Need advice?

Tel	0113 380 4300
Email	<a href="mailto:advice@carersleeds.org.uk">advice@carersleeds.org.uk</a>
Website	<a href="http://carersleeds.org.uk">carersleeds.org.uk</a>

## Socials

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Carers Advice Line  
**0113 380 4300**