

Befriending  
Special  
Edition



# Volunteers' News

## Winter 2023





# Reflecting on a year of volunteering

Valerie, Volunteer Co-ordinator/  
News Editor



Hello Volunteers,

As I reflect on the past year, I think of all our volunteers, that have supported us, with such admiration. You give me hope because of your generosity and kindness towards others.

One of my highlights this year was creating our first Volunteer Survey and Impact Report. We've been collecting this information and publishing it in our volunteer newsletter for a number of years. However, I have wanted to create a report that really highlights the work that our amazing volunteer team does. I love championing the impact made by our volunteers, and I'm excited to be doing it again in January, as we reflect on how each of you have made a difference in 2023!

We can't look back on this year without mentioning our success in renewing our Investing in Volunteers award. This is the UK quality standard for good practice in volunteer management. When I first joined Carers Leeds in 2004, after working at a Volunteer Centre for 5 years, I was pleased to find such a positive approach to working with volunteers.

This continues to this day, and achieving the award for the third time is recognition of the fantastic volunteering culture created by our volunteer and staff teams.

Another first this year, was publishing our Vision for Volunteering strategy. We are proud to provide high quality volunteering opportunities at Carers Leeds, which are embedded across the organisation and are well managed, supported and valued. Our Vision sets out an even more ambitious approach for the coming years.

It's an absolute privilege to be able to produce volunteering reports, and strategies, and to receive awards, but the joy of my work comes from working alongside and spending time with volunteers.

Back in April, I remember feeling so moved by the stories presented by volunteers at our Staff meeting.

In June, I recall laughing with volunteers at our annual Volunteers' Week celebration and I was happy to see three of our volunteers receive an award for their 5 years of service.

When August came, we kept our fingers crossed that it would stop raining for our annual volunteers' picnic and the Leeds Pride Parade. Thankfully, it did, and staff and volunteers enjoyed a fun and relaxing picnic at Kirkstall Abbey. Together with volunteers, staff and carers, I had a great day participating in the Leeds Pride Parade.

While I write this, Gayle and Holly are getting ready for our "Volunteer Festive Lunch" on Tuesday, 12th December. They are looking forward to having a good time with all of you at our end-of-year celebration. I know there will be plenty of good company, nice food, music, and a fun quiz.

Creating our volunteer newsletter is another aspect of my work that I truly enjoy, and it's been wonderful to have so many stories and contributions from volunteers this year. I invited Gayle and Holly to write articles on Befriending for this edition.

So, here it is, our Befriending special edition newsletter, so that we can all learn more about the role and the impact of our volunteer Befriending teams. I hope you enjoy reading it.

Wishing everyone peace, joy and happiness.

Valerie

## *Befriending*

### **A BRIEF HISTORY BY VALERIE, VOLUNTEER CO-ORDINATOR**

**2004** When I first joined Carers Leeds, as Office Administrator, I was pleased to discover a team of enthusiastic newsletter volunteers and a thriving volunteer Befriending project that was funded by The Big Lottery for 5 years.

**2013** I returned to Carers Leeds after working for Citizens Advice for 4 years. I found that the organisation had successfully obtained 2 years funding from the Department of Health to run a volunteer Befriending project.

**2016** Time to Shine, funded us for 12 months to run a volunteer Befriending service for 50+ dementia carers. It was a privilege for me to co-ordinate a telephone befriending service. I worked alongside dedicated teams of Carer Support Workers and volunteer Befrienders.

**2017** Leeds Community Foundation funded us for 1 year to run a volunteer Befriending service for carers aged 50+ who were struggling with their mental wellbeing. This was co-ordinated by Nikki.

**2019** After years of short-term funding we successfully secured a further 3 years funding for Befriending from Time to Shine.

**2020** Befriending service continued by phone and Zoom during lockdowns and was co-ordinated by Aidan.

**2023** Thanks to the commitment of volunteers, our Befriending projects continue to thrive and are now co-ordinated by Gayle and Holly.

# What is Befriending?



Everyone needs other people, but not everyone has someone.

Befriending offers supportive, reliable relationships through volunteer befrienders to people who would otherwise be socially isolated.

Around the UK, there are befriending projects which organise effective support for children and young people, families, people with mental ill-health, people with learning disabilities and older people, amongst many others.

The results of befriending can be very significant.

Befriending often provides people with a new direction in life, opens up a range of activities and leads to increased self-esteem and self confidence.

Befriending can also reduce the burden on other services which people may use inappropriately as they seek social contact.

What is Befriending? video  
<https://youtu.be/lrsGPvQKAzw>

(Befriending Networks, 2023)

## BEFRIENDING NETWORKS UK STATISTICS REPORT 2023

**ECONOMIC  
VALUE**

**£16.3  
million**

**PEOPLE  
SUPPORTED**

**55,391**

**BEFRIENDING  
HOURS**

**1,008,987**



“

The chances are we've all been affected by Loneliness, either directly or through someone close to us. We can all do more to try and make a difference and make our country a less lonely place.

—Minister for Loneliness, Baroness Diana Barran

”

# Meet Gayle, Befriending Co-ordinator



Hello, I am Gayle, Carers Befriending Co-ordinator! I have been in my role since July 2022.

A little bit about me... I previously worked for Home-Start Leeds, as a Volunteer Co-ordinator. I also volunteered for Home-Start before I was employed them.

I have a 12-year-old son, and a little dog called Duke whom I spend most of my time with, as my son prefers an Xbox to me it would seem!

I lived in Spain for 10 years. However I thought the weather in Leeds was so much better so moved back home! Truth be known I missed my family terribly. Fun Fact: I was previously a Barber!

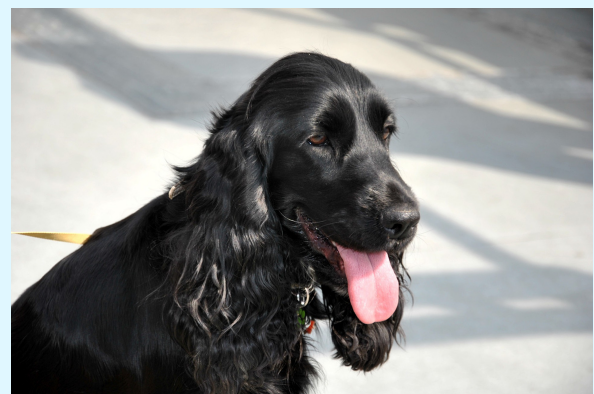
A little about my role... as the Carers Befriending Co-ordinator at Carers Leeds. Carers are referred to me from the projects within Carers Leeds. Carers can also refer themselves for Befriending support.

Once a carer is referred, I will contact the carer and explain befriending support and how the support could help them feel less isolated and/or lonely.

I complete my assessment with the carer and then place them on a waiting list until I identify a volunteer that I feel the carer would be best matched to.

Once a befriending volunteer is matched to a carer, I then support the volunteer supporting the carer by offering 1-1 catch ups and regular check ins.

Within my role I recruit befriending volunteers and deliver all training and support to befriending volunteers.





“

I'm so grateful for the support from my befriending volunteer. I looked forward to our sessions each time.

Sometimes I would cry for the whole hour and my befriender would just sit and listen without judgement and was so supportive. It was the only time I really felt I could open up to anyone about my caring role.

A Carer

”

# Say Hello to Dianne, Befriender



"Hello, I am Dianne.

Many of you will know me by sight, if not by name. I was recently given a gift of a notebook, with the title, "I'm a Carers Leeds Volunteer". Yes, I am, and I love it. Carers Leeds really does care about its volunteers.

My main volunteering role is as a befriender. I have been a befriender for a long time. I enjoy chatting with someone, either by phone or face to face.

Lots of people tell me the chats are the highlight of their week.

The notebook also asks, "What's your superpower?" I wish I had one that would take away the hardship, pain and suffering carers and their loved ones must cope with day in, day out.

Thank you Carers Leeds."

Thank you Dianne, we think you and all our volunteers have Superpowers!

The following is a list of volunteer superpowers that we included in our notebook, "What's your superpower?"

I am Kind  
I am Caring  
I am Considerate  
I am Empathetic  
I am Compassionate  
I am Patient  
I am Positive  
I am Making a Difference  
I am Passionate  
I am Inclusive







*“Knowing that I’m helping someone  
in a time of need makes being a  
befriender so worthwhile.”*

Befriender

# Say Hello to Mari, Befriender



Hello, I am Mari. I applied to Carers Leeds after seeing a flyer at my local supermarket. It looked interesting, and I was looking for a new volunteering opportunity.

When I emailed for information, Nikki was very swift and welcoming in her response. She told me all about Carers Leeds and explained the befriending role.

I remembered how difficult my dad found it when he was caring for my mum, who had Alzheimer's. This service wasn't available in the area where he lived.

I have been 'matched' with over ten carers over the past four years; face-to-face (cafes, walking and at home) and by phone. Everyone is different and facing their own challenges. I have met some amazing people.

The skills I developed in my working life, both in the NHS and higher education, have been useful, both with the carers and supporting befriending colleagues.

I have also had wholehearted support from my supervisors, most recently Gayle, but all the Carers Leeds team are friendly and welcoming.

When I'm not volunteering, I like to keep fit with Pilates, walking and the gym and have recently started yoga—this last is definitely work in progress.

I love to travel and sing, sometimes I manage to combine both. I belong to one large choir and a small jazz group. And when not doing any of those, I write fiction—very short fiction and occasionally poetry. But I can assure you this is not a work of fiction!





# Carers Leeds 2023 Annual Survey

Have your  
say!



Are you an unpaid carer?  
We want to hear from you.

Leave your name to enter our  
prize draw!

carers advice line  
**0113 380 4300**

Scan to complete  
the survey online.



**6-8 The Headrow, Leeds, LS1 6PT**  
**Admin Tel** 0113 246 8338  
**Email** [advice@carersleeds.org.uk](mailto:advice@carersleeds.org.uk)

**Website** [carersleeds.org.uk](https://carersleeds.org.uk)  
**Twitter/X** @CarersLeeds  
**Facebook** Carers Leeds

Digital inclusion is important as 1 in 20 people still have no internet access and many people feel as though they do not have the basic internet skills to support them in daily life.

We can't wait to see all of the amazing things they achieve in 2024.





Our monthly Carers Leeds Digital Carers Corner e-newsletter!

Here, we discuss updates to our digital support project, hand out top tips which will help you become more tech savvy, run monthly digital challenges, and offer you our favourite digital recommendations.

Subscribe to our e-newsletter Carers News to receive a regular copy of Digital Carers Corner  
<https://www.carersleeds.org.uk/publications/newsletter/>

**carers advice line**  
**0113 380 4300**

Don't miss out on  
the November  
edition!



**6-8 The Headrow, Leeds, LS1 6PT**  
**Admin Tel** 0113 246 8338  
**Email** [advice@carersleeds.org.uk](mailto:advice@carersleeds.org.uk)

<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://www.carersleeds.org.uk">carersleeds.org.uk</a>
<b>Twitter/X</b>	<a href="https://twitter.com/CarersLeeds">@CarersLeeds</a>
<b>Facebook</b>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/CarersLeeds">Carers Leeds</a>

# Meet Holly, Digital Inclusion Co-ordinator



Hello everyone! I am Holly, Digital Inclusion Co-ordinator! I have been in my role since December 2020 – I can't believe time has flown by so quickly!

More recently, I have also become a Digital Befriending Co-ordinator (the other pea in the befriending pod with Gayle) as we have had our brand-new digital inclusion befriending service since November 2022.

Before I started at Carers Leeds, I was actually a volunteer befriender here myself whilst I was studying at university for a Cognitive Neuropsychology Masters, and absolutely loved it.

I also have two old, little Jack Russell Terriers, Poppy and Millie (aged 17 and 14!), who I miss lots, now that I've moved away from home. I love exploring different food spots, anywhere and everywhere, as I have a food blog so like to review and share what I've tried.

I like going for walks whilst listening to podcasts and tunes and am trying to get into the gym... it counts if I have a membership but have never been yet, right?

In my role as Digital Inclusion Co-ordinator, I support carers to feel more confident using technology to reduce loneliness and isolation. We know lots of things these days rely on us being online, from doctor's appointments to banking, and this can often feel overwhelming at times.

Once a referral comes into the digital project, I complete my assessment with them to identify what their goals, motivations, and interests are and then begin 1 to 1 support to help them reach these goals.

Since starting our new digital inclusion befriending service, I now match carers to volunteers with similar interests who carry out 1 to 1 digital support in the community, and support the volunteer in the same way as Gayle.

“

‘My Digital Inclusion Befriender was a good help and it’s encouraging. It has definitely given me a bit more confidence and a boost to go ahead with it. Before, I was very timid and now it’s been amazing how many times I’ve used texting.’

A Carer

”

# David's Digital Experience



Hello, I am David.

My role as a Digital Inclusion Befriender has involved helping carers with little or no previous experience of IT to become familiar, competent and independent in using a tablet.

Tasks have included setting up online accounts, being systematic and secure in the use of passwords, and use of email, social media and video conferencing. Being aware of a wide range of apps, their benefit and possible security issues has also been covered.

I have witnessed how carers can feel less isolated and generally more involved with the outside world as a result.

This has been a very rewarding role to be in, as I have seen the huge increase in skills and confidence of the carers.

It has been good to see how empowering the use of IT can be and how satisfying the weekly progression is for the carer.

## DIGITAL EXCLUSION STATISTICS

### WORLDWIDE

2.9 billion people are digitally excluded

### UK

6.9 Million people will remain excluded if they are not helped

### INTERNET

Essential items can cost more without Internet access





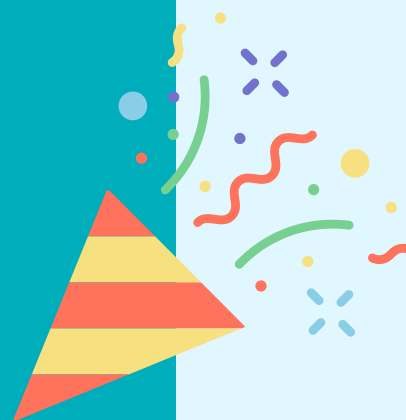
*"The carer I befriend has readily admitted once again, that she had been terrified at the thought of IT. In fact, she stated that her first session had been so amazing that she "arrived feeling only a millimetre tall, but left feeling 6 feet tall!". Wow!"*

Digital Inclusion Befriender



# Befriending Week Celebration

Befriending is not possible without Befrienders!



Befriending Week is an annual event that takes place in communities around the world. It typically occurs in the second week of November, and its purpose is to celebrate and promote the importance of befriending, fostering relationships, and combatting social isolation.

On the 1st of November Holly and Gayle celebrated Befriending week. They held a party at The Headrow for our Befriending volunteers - Claire Turner, CEO came along too.

All Befriending volunteers were presented with a Thank You certificate to show our appreciation for all the hard work and commitment they offer carers.

So far this year Befriending volunteers have supported 30 Carers which is around 75 hours of support! We have had some real success stories, lots of positive feedback and for one carer befriending support has been life changing.

We think that is pretty amazing!



# ≡Welcome≡

## Let us introduce you to our new volunteers

Gillian, Befriender  
Margaret, Befriender

Diane, Keeping In Touch Caller  
Jane, Support Group Assistant  
Katherine, Support Group Assistant

Thank you for choosing Carers Leeds. We're so happy to have you here.



### Margaret says "Goodbye" after 16 years

"Firstly, I enjoyed every minute of my time at Carers Leeds, looked forward to being in Reception on a Monday, working with a great team of people, always in awe of the help and support given to all carers either on the phone or in person."

"My role as Support Group Assistant for the Wetherby Group, assisting my colleague Angie, was such a privilege, being involved for a couple of hours a month, providing a listening ear and making a cuppa. The Carers who attend this group appreciate the service provided by Carers Leeds for the unpaid carer."

Thank you Margaret for your amazing 16 years of volunteering service at Carers Leeds. We will miss you!

**Valerie Banks**

Volunteer Co-ordinator/News Editor

**Thank You**

to our volunteer proofreaders Christine, Irene and Ruth.

And to our contributors David, Dianne, Gayle, Holly, Margaret and Mari.

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 (0798 754 570)



# Carers Leeds

Working together to support carers

## Carers Leeds

6-8 The Headrow  
Leeds  
LS1 6PT

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

Twitter / X	@CarersLeeds
Facebook	Carers Leeds

carers advice line  
**0113 380 4300**

Registered Charity No. 1058706  
Company Limited by Guarantee 3242065