

Case study: Small acts, big difference: Penelope's volunteer story

Volunteer name: Penelope

Age: 59

Volunteer role(s): Service Mapping, Help at Home

Motivation to volunteer:

My journey into volunteering is deeply personal; it was inspired by the time I spent caring for my maternal grandmother in Guyana, South America. Because she lived so far away, I felt I could only look after her in short bursts with long gaps in between. While I was so glad for the time I did have with her before she passed, I always felt like it wasn't enough. I wanted to do so much more.

That experience planted a seed. I wanted to help people locally who, like my grandmother, didn't have family nearby to support them. I spent years looking on and off for the right opportunity, until I came across the Care Network (CNC) stall at a local event. It was perfect. It offered me the chance to offer help to those who are alone or just need someone to talk to—providing the kind of care I wished I could have given my grandmother.

Experience and impact:

For me, the most rewarding part of this work is seeing the relief and gratitude in the people we help. CNC opens up possibilities for those who might not know what support is available when they are struggling to live independently.

One experience that stands out involved a client who lived alone; his nearest relative was hours away and could only visit once a month. Despite his health issues, he was the happiest, most cheerful man. He was always so grateful for the help and made sure to tell me so. Meeting people like him makes it all worthwhile.

Of course, there are challenges. Balancing volunteering with full-time work can sometimes be tricky when trying to fit clients into a busy schedule. But the feeling I get when I see the impact of the work outweighs the juggling act. It might be a small thing for me to do, but I can see that it makes a massive difference to them.

Future and advice:

If you are thinking about volunteering, my advice is simple: whatever time you can spare—no matter how often—will be a huge help to someone who needs it. Volunteers are often in short supply, so you will be providing a great service.

From the moment I stopped at the CNC stall to the time I began my training, the team has been incredibly supportive and friendly. It is such a great organization to volunteer with. I actually hope to get more involved in the future, perhaps even working alongside the amazing coordinators in a different role. Quite simply, I stay involved because I want to help others. If you want to make a difference, please choose Care Network!