

Case study: Finding your new 'normal' Kay's story

Volunteer name: Kay

Age: 74

Volunteer role(s): Trusted Friend, Help at Home

Finding Your "New Normal": How Kay Rediscovered Her Purpose Through Volunteering

The Journey to Resilience

Life as an Army wife meant Kay was always on the move, shifting between countries and communities. It was a life that demanded high-level organization and incredible resilience—skills Kay later poured into a rewarding career as a Nursery Nurse and a Health Care Support Worker.

In the hospital, Kay was the person patients turned to when they were at their most vulnerable. She helped them face their fears, encouraged their recovery, and flourished in the fast-paced, person-centered environment. For Kay, connection wasn't just part of the job; it was the heartbeat of her day.

The "Retirement Slump": When the Busy-ness Stops

When the day finally came to hang up the uniform and retire, Kay expected relaxation. Instead, she found a disconcerting silence. The loss of structure and the sudden absence of a busy team left her feeling "adrift." Like many people who have spent their lives caring for others, the transition led to a difficult period of anxiety and depression.

"It was a very strange time," Kay recalls. But as a naturally positive person, she realized what was missing: Connection. She knew she had more to give, so she took a brave first step and headed to a local recruitment fair to see how she could turn her skills into a new mission.

A Warm Welcome Home

Kay found her perfect match with Care Network Cambridgeshire, specifically in our Help at Home and Trusted Friend roles.

The onboarding process provided the structure she had been missing. From using a loan laptop in our Chatteris office to complete training alongside other applicants, to attending in-person inductions with five fellow volunteers, Kay was part of a team again.

On her first client visit, Kay wasn't alone; she was supported by our staff and an experienced local volunteer who is now part of her "peer support" circle.

The Wellbeing Win: "More Like My Old Self"

The impact on Kay's mental health was almost immediate. As she began visiting clients, her friends started noticing a change, remarking that she finally seemed *"more like her old self again."*

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By giving back, Kay found her mood lifted. The "adrift" feeling was replaced by a familiar sense of purpose. Her lived experience with anxiety and her professional background in healthcare became her "superpowers," allowing her to connect deeply with people who truly needed her.

Kay's Advice: Just Take the First Step

Today, Kay is an active, vital part of a caring community. Volunteering with CNC offers her the flexibility she needs in retirement, while ensuring she stays as busy and connected as she wants to be.

"Becoming a volunteer has been such a positive experience," Kay says. "It's a way to utilize the skills I spent years building to benefit others. If you're thinking about it, just take that first step. Everything else will fall into place, and I promise—you won't regret it."