



Voices of North Yorkshire – Hilary podcast transcript

Leah – Hello, my name’s Leah Furniss and I am Volunteer Support Worker with Community First Yorkshire and I’m joined by my colleague Hilary who is going to chat to us about her volunteering. Hi Hilary!

Hilary – Hi

Leah – So, first of all Hilary, what is your volunteering, what do you do?

Hilary – I do dog walking and befriending

Leah – Dog walking and befriending. Do you do that yourself or do you do that through an organisation?

Hilary – I do that by myself. I do it with two sets of elderly neighbours. One’s a couple and one’s a widow.

Leah – So it’s kind of like community volunteering then?

Hilary – Yeah

Leah – So quite informal?

Hilary – Yes, very informal yeah.

Leah – Um, how did you get involved with it? How did that start?

Hilary – I just came to know about it through chatting with my neighbours and catching them as I was passing them in the street and asking them how they were and just found out about the need there. So I started the dog walking about two years ago. I’d just been made redundant and found out the husband of the elderly couple had fallen ill and, so he needed to have home care visits in the morning. And because there was no set time for these visits, the wife couldn’t go out to take her dog for her morning constitutional, so I volunteered to help them out. And to be honest it was a two way thing at that time cos it forced me out of the house every day for a good walk and it helped me mentally, physically and emotionally through being redundant and full time job hunting. It kind of gave me a focus for the day and I’d go out for a long walk at the beginning and settle down to job hunting. And, um, once I found the, a job, the dog walking obviously reduced but I have kept it up and it fluctuates according to the needs of the couple’s health. And, so as time’s gone on I suppose it’s also developed into a befriending role, although I just see it as friendship really.

Leah – That’s what I was gonna ask. When you first started did you see it as volunteering?



Hilary – No. No, not at all. And the same for the widow. I mean it just happened so naturally cos after the initial conversation I could, um, see she felt a bit lonely, um, and I mean I knew her anyway but I just thought well she, she is sounding like she's a bit lonely so I just started calling on her once a week for a cuppa and a chat and it's just continued.

Leah – Yeah I think this sort of volunteering you're doing with everything that's going on at the moment and the coronavirus pandemic, I think lots and lots of people are doing bits and pieces of volunteering like this. Do you think that they probably see it themselves as volunteering or?

Hilary – I doubt it very much. I think when it's your neighbours you don't see it as volunteering cos like when I spoke to you I said, well I do this but is it really volunteering? I wasn't really sure. But you said oh yes, yes, it's volunteering.

Leah – Yes, yes it is volunteering. Um, do you think there's any challenges with this type of volunteering?

Hilary – Um, well my biggest challenge is time, um particularly with the weekly chats, the weekly tea and chat. Um, but I kind of diarise it in my head, so it's become a normal part of my week.

Leah – And um, do you think, do you know anything about social action? The idea of it?

Hilary – A little bit yeah.

Leah – I just think from just what you're saying this is very much the kind of social action model of volunteering. It is volunteering but it's sort of recognising what's going on in your community and thinking about how you can do something yourself without it needing to be directed by someone. Do you think there's any myths around volunteering? Particularly this sort of type of volunteering that from your experience you could kind of 'myth bust.'

Hilary – Not about this volunteering. I guess from my own point of view I thought about volunteering it sort of sucks you in and there's no escape. And, uh, but of course you always have a choice and I know that both sets of neighbours are very grateful for whatever support and time I can give them. And they totally understand if I can no longer manage it, and there have been weeks when I haven't been able to do it and they're fine with it, you know, cos you know they're just so grateful for what you can do, so yeah it's fine.

Leah – Yeah, um. Oo, what I was gonna say, I think you might have answered this a bit already. What is it that you like most about this bit of volunteering that you do?

Hilary – Well, I just love, love the people cos they're great and, um, I like the very local volunteering because it helps to foster community spirit in my neighbourhood.

Leah – Yeah, I agree. And, if somebody was thinking about getting involved with volunteering or perhaps was a bit worried about supporting others within their community and kind of stepping up and doing it themselves, what would you say to them?

Hilary – Ooh go for it! Give it a go. It's great fun and you meet new people and make new friends and, I mean, I have. It's deepened my relationships with my neighbours and it's not only with them cos they've introduced me with their friend and their family, you know when they've been visiting and I've been around. So it's been really lovely and I thoroughly recommend it.

Leah – Thank you Hilary, that's great!

Hilary – Thank you

Leah – Bye!

Hilary – Bye!