



# VOLUNTEERS' WEEK



*A future for all ages*

## A BIG Thank You to All Our Volunteers!

We would like to say a big thank you to all our volunteers for all of the help and support provided over the last twelve months and particularly an extra big thank you for their continued help and support during the Covid 19 lockdown.

The following figures illustrate how much volunteers have contributed during this challenging period



All the clients who have received help and support have been affected by the Covid 19 lockdown. Each of the 22 individuals we have helped had unique support needs that volunteers have helped to meet.

To better understand what volunteering in BJJ means we asked volunteers to send us their stories about why they volunteered, what they gain from it and the difference they make. Here are the stories that some of our volunteers sent us along with thank you messages from clients and staff.

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**Staffordshire Cancer Support  
Programme (CaSP)**  
*Because you are more than your diagnosis*



**Volunteers Week: 2020**  
**A time to say "Thank You"...**

Staffordshire Cancer Support Programme (CaSP) supports older adults who have had a recent diagnosis, undergoing treatment, finished treatment or in remission or living with incurable cancer to improve their quality of life by looking at ways to help with any difficulties they may be facing including emotional support.

Our volunteer Buddies are an integral part of CaSP. Under 'normal' circumstances, the volunteers give their time to visit our clients in their own home, to be a 'friend with a purpose'; a listening ear when they need someone to talk to or encourage and help our clients find support groups and social opportunities.

Since the onset of the Covid-19 restrictions, many of our clients are self-isolating or shielding. The impact of this has seen an increased number of people experiencing feelings of loneliness and isolation and many have had appointments and treatments delayed which has left them fearful for the future after Covid-19. Their usual support network of family and friends feel more distant as they are unable to visit. Our army of volunteers provide crucial emotional support, relieving the intense feelings of loneliness and giving our clients a conversation to look forward to, someone to off-load their thoughts, to experience an everyday 'chat' and share memories.

I sincerely thank all of the volunteers for willingly giving their time, supporting not only our clients but staff too and for their contribution to the continuing success of CaSP as a service supporting adults affected by cancer, especially during this difficult time. Thank you.

Collette Cooper  
(Senior Link Worker)

# CaSP Volunteer Stories



## Anna (CaSP Telephone Buddy)

I volunteered with the Beth Johnson Foundation because I enjoy talking to people of all ages and backgrounds and would love to help somebody who's going through a difficult time.

What I hope to gain by volunteering is to feel like I'm making a positive impact in some small way.

The difference I hope to make to others through volunteering is to make sure my clients know they have somebody they can talk to about absolutely anything and to hopefully make them feel less lonely or isolated.

**"Anna is a breath of life and air. She has made me feel special and our talks stop me thinking that my cancer is terminal. I so hope that Anna accepts and will stay with me through the journey."**

(new client of the telephone buddy service)



## Dianne (CaSP Buddy Volunteer)

My story started about 5 years ago after retirement. I did not want to become a couch potato and a friend told me about BJJ looking for volunteers for the cancer advocacy program. I visited a few people and supported one to hospital visits. This was rewarding and very helpful for both sides.

After a few months off due to ill health I now have recently become a telephone buddy and paired with a lovely gentleman age 92 and struggling with the loss of his wife as well as his cancer. We start off with him on a low but soon get him telling me about his past work and life, we both end up laughing, it certainly gives us a lift in lockdown. I really enjoy my volunteering with BJJ.

**"Thank you for the call, it has done him good to have someone to talk to"**

(message from the son of a client receiving volunteer support during the Covid 19 lockdown)



### **Sarah (CaSP Telephone Buddy)**

I volunteered with the Beth Johnson Foundation because I wanted to support people through their Cancer journey via CaSP which is their Staffordshire Cancer Support Program. I'm a Breast Cancer survivor and was by my father-in-law's side through his bowel cancer. I was so lucky

to have incredible people around me that helped me to see the light on my dark days. I wanted to try and be that ray of sunshine for others as they faced that difficult diagnosis and beyond.

What I have gained by volunteering is a different perspective to what was a very personal experience. We have really good training but I also chose to work through the Macmillan Cancer Awareness Course to boost my understanding. I won't pretend that this was easy reading and admit that I questioned my strength to be a Telephone Buddy but

Andrew from CaSP gave me incredible support to carry on. I am so glad I did because I can make a difference in just being a friendly voice who is removed from the family. I can be a sounding board on topics that may be too difficult to share with their loved ones. We can also escalate any issues that we feel may need more support so it's really satisfying to be able to help with the more practical matters too.

The difference I have made to others through volunteering is inspiring. Our Clients are not just a diagnosis but incredible people who happen to be going through a tough time. Yes we talk about the cancer and share sad moments but we also talk about the everyday and relive their happy times through fresh eyes. We share so much laughter that it is truly an honour to be a part of their lives and support them as they go forward.

**“My buddy is such a lovely person we get on really well and I enjoy her calls. We have a lot in common. We've been talking about trees and now when she goes walking, she says she thinks about me. My oncologist has told me I can't go out for a while longer yet. Thank you for the calls”**

(comment from a client subject to social shielding)



### **Adrian (CaSP Buddy Volunteer)**

I have been a Volunteer with BJJ for over 5 years, firstly as an Advocate and latterly as a Cancer Guide and a Buddy. My original motivation to become involved followed my retirement after 50 years in Engineering and surviving Colon Cancer. I realised how lucky I was to have had effective treatment and strong family

support. Many of our clients are not so fortunate. Some of the issues I had to deal with include isolation, not understanding diagnosis, effective complaint procedures, money worries, hoarding and family support (lack of).

Throughout my time with BJB I have felt part of a team and been given training and guidance when needed. Communication is relaxed and effective and there are opportunities to interact with fellow Volunteers. It is vital I think to be a good listener after you have given the client confidence to confide in you since they may have had poor outcomes from treatment or are intimidated by the sheer complexity of their situation. Whilst it is difficult to maintain positivity in challenging cases it is rewarding to know that you have helped in their hour of need.

**“Thank you for your time and the sound advice you give me”**

(client who asked volunteer where to get food in the Covid 19 lockdown)



### **Yvonne (CaSP Telephone Buddy)**

I volunteered with the Beth Johnson Foundation because over several years, I have experienced the loss of family members to cancer and, more recently a younger member of my family had been undergoing treatment for cancer. The experience has taught me the value of providing support such that I wish to extend this to help others in a similar situation. Through research I became aware of the Beth Johnson Foundation and subsequently became a 'buddy'.

What I hope to gain by volunteering is knowing that I will be able to provide help and support to individuals facing similar situations. Talking with my first client has already proved rewarding, as they have said they do look forward to our twice weekly calls where the conversations have flowed very smoothly.

The difference I hope to make to others through volunteering is that I will be able to provide some comfort to clients and simply allow them to talk through any issues that they want to discuss. I would encourage anybody with spare time to be a volunteer to help make a difference to someone's life.

**“I am impressed with how quickly our volunteers have worked with a client to build trust and become an important part of their support. In particular highlighting potential problems and gently steering the client in the right direction.**

**All clients I have spoken to are very grateful for the volunteer phone calls and look forward to them every time”**

Caroline Bradford (CaSP Link Worker, South Staffs)



### **Pauline (CaSP Buddy Volunteer)**

I volunteered with the Beth Johnson Foundation because in the summer of 2012 my retirement from a long career in the Social Care Sector was approaching and I began to think about how I could continue in some way in this area of work. At several stages of my career I had been involved with the 'Third Sector' and had met with and worked with numerous volunteers so I decided that volunteering was what I wanted to do. I read an article in the Evening Sentinel about the funding of a pilot Cancer Advocacy scheme that the Beth Johnson Foundation had been awarded. I was very interested in this as I had previous knowledge of the Foundation and their excellent reputation of supporting older people. I also had some professional experience of working with and supporting people affected by cancer as well as supporting relatives and friends through their cancer journeys. So I applied to become a volunteer on the Project and was accepted onto the training course.

What I have gained by volunteering is that it gives me not only the opportunity to 'give something back' to the community of North Staffordshire but also enables me to widen my knowledge and experience of supporting people directly and indirectly but also by the excellent training courses offered.

The difference I have made to others through volunteering is that during the past 8 years that I have been involved with CaSP I have worked with a number of clients. One which I especially recall is 'H'. He was 70 years old who had been diagnosed as terminally ill with throat cancer, was single and had no known family. He lived in sheltered housing and had expressed a wish to make his Will and plan his funeral. He had stated that he wanted to leave the whole of his money to the local hospice. The complication for H to do this was that he could neither read or write.

**"I know from personal experience how beneficial it is to have someone who is 'there' for you when times are difficult... So on behalf of all of us at CaSP, at BJB and of all of our clients – thank you so much to all our volunteers for your enthusiasm and genuine dedication. You make a world of difference!"**

Amanda Carter  
(CaSP Link Worker, North Staffs)

My role was to support the CaSP Senior Link Worker in ascertaining from H if this was what he wanted, to assist him to make the informed decision as to which solicitor he wanted to employ, arrange for the solicitor of his choice to carry out his instructions, plan with the

solicitor a practical way of ensuring that H could feel confident that his instructions would be complied with (this was ensured by the Will writing session being recorded on a Dictaphone machine so that H could listen to it as and when he wished to. Also, discuss with H his wishes for his funeral and ensure that these were recorded in his Will.

All these tasks were completed to H's satisfaction. A few months later I attended H's funeral and was pleased that everything was carried out exactly as he had requested. That gave me a great feeling of 'job satisfaction' and the solicitor later thanked me and the Beth Johnson Foundation for the professional and empathic way that the service had been provided for H.

**"I'd also like to say a big thank you to Pauline for all the time she has given to help me in the office over the last twelve months"**

Angela Tunncliffe (Office Manager)



### **Jo (CaSP Telephone Buddy)**

I volunteered with the Beth Johnson Foundation because my mother died of cancer on 1st June 2019 and I've been looking for ways to volunteer meaningfully and 'contribute' whilst still being able to fulfil my day job. I researched opportunities to volunteer

locally and chose the Cancer Support Scheme with BJB because the other options available were fundraising (such as running marathons and bake sales, neither of which are my strong suit) and I wanted to support people directly, on a one-to-one basis.

As a Telephone Buddy, I hope that I can provide direct support by way of a listening ear to those who need it, and eventually visit them when the current lockdown restrictions allow. I'd like to think it would have made my mum proud to know I was making a difference to somebody's cancer journey.

**"I like to receive her calls, she cheers me up and it's nice to talk"**

(feedback from a client who has received calls from a volunteer for over a year)



### Wendy (CaSP Telephone Buddy)

I volunteered with the Beth Johnson Foundation because I wanted to use the spare time I have due to being in lockdown for the coronavirus to good advantage. I felt that being a Telephone

Buddy would be mutually beneficial for myself and someone who is self-isolating.

What I hope to gain by volunteering is to get some valuable experience under my belt.

The difference I hope to make to others through volunteering is to be a point of contact someone may not normally have. And to be a good listener for someone who needs to talk about their circumstances in full confidence.

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**“She always listens and cares about what I have to say, thank you”**

(new client of the volunteer telephone buddy service)



### Robert (Telephone Buddy)

I am a new Beth Johnson Foundation volunteer and I volunteered because the quarantine has left me with a lot of time and as such I wanted to do something that would help others besides making Warhammer 40k miniatures.

I hoped to gain something to distinguish myself of my CV as I am training to be an engineer so I would like something different to distinguish me.

I just hope that my volunteering can bring a smile to someone's face and improve the world in one small way.

**“Thank you for your help you are doing a good job under the present circumstances”**

(message received from a client of the volunteer buddy service during the Covid 19 lockdown)

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The Healthy Generations team would like to thank the volunteers who have given their time to the project and participants. Supporting community members to take part in the positive aging sessions. During the sessions volunteers have also been delivering basic digital skills workshops where beneficiaries have been able to receive one-to-one support from our volunteer tech buddies. This has included help with emails, social media and using mobile phones.

## The Tech Buddy Volunteers

The Healthy Generation Project has recruited some really talented and helpful volunteers to help back up our hub based and outreach sessions. They are an invaluable resource for us as we are not totally IT experts and their knowledge and skills have been very much appreciated. They have been extremely patient with anyone who asks questions regarding the digital sessions that we've been running. We would not have been so successful in developing the project without them.



**Jon offering tech advice**

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## Case study from a Tech Buddy Volunteer (names have been changed)

### Why I volunteered

There's the enjoyment of meeting new people, for instance I heard the following two lovely stories during conversation:

1. *Helen* was dyslexic from childhood, she said she suffered frustration and embarrassment during her school years. *Helen* had a son at about age 25, she worried about being unable to help him with his reading when he reached school age. Regardless, despite her anticipating it being a futile exercise, she sat down with him to try. To her amazement, *Helen's* lifelong dyslexia dissipated and she was able to help her son. Furthermore, she became an avid reader herself with a prodigious appetite for books.

2. *Jean* had a friend whose daughter had long suffered from unsightly warts on her hands, arms, feet and legs. In a kindly act of distraction, *Jean* offered to buy the warts off the girl for five pence each. In a very short time the girl's warts started to disappear. The girl confessed to her mother how she was worried that *Jean* would now have the warts she'd bought from her.

I met another volunteer, who is a young woman from Romania studying forensic science at Keele University. She finds the time and makes the effort to be involved as a volunteer with BJB, she's an inspiration.

### **What I have gained**

At a life-skill level, volunteering has helped me to better understand empathy and develop my listening skills. On a simplistic level, I learned about the 'over fifties' social meeting at Penkhull village hall, I went to one event and met lots of new people and had enjoyable conversations.

### **The difference I have made through volunteering**

I don't view my contribution as singularly making a major difference to anyone, but felt that lots of small things, when considered in totality made it a very worthwhile exercise. I've helped people organise photos on their tablets, setup browser shortcuts, install weather and free newspaper apps, demonstrate Google maps, give advice on using note taking apps, etc. I leveraged my passion for pragmatic approaches to internet security, leading me to create a simple, two-page leaflet which I often hand out - it can be downloaded from the following location: <http://www.inededtoneeded.com/beth-johnson-tech-buddy.html>



**Maggie helping with digital drawing**

**"Volunteering boosts my morale"**

**"I enjoy helping other people and giving something back"**

Quotes from Healthy Generations  
Volunteers

Thank you to everyone who sent in their stories and thank you messages. Please bear in mind that some of the thank you messages from clients relate to support from volunteers who have chosen not to send in their stories. Also, we have lots of good feedback from clients about volunteers that we cannot publish. Thank you to all our volunteers for everything that you do; you are all very much appreciated. (Andrew Colclough, Volunteer Co-ordinator - Staffordshire Cancer Support Programme)

The last message of thanks in this special edition newsletter is from our interim CEO, Professor Sue Read...

Volunteers give their time freely and of course their wisdom too. We are proud to recognise the achievements of our growing army of volunteers; their time, commitment and compassion that they so willingly give. Their personal stories well illustrate that our volunteers come from all walks of life; are of all ages; with a wealth of different experiences. We truly value the support that they give to the Beth Johnson Foundation, and the client's quotes illustrate strongly how much their direct support is needed and indeed welcomed. On behalf of all of us at the BJF (staff and the Board of Trustees), thank you all, and I hope we can continue to grow our army of volunteers in the years to come.

Professor Sue Read (interim, CEO).

# Thank You!

## **Beth Johnson Foundation**

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