

growing support

because gardens are good for you



Volunteering with Growing Support: Deborah's Story

Why did you volunteer with Growing Support?

Some years ago I discovered a real love of growing things, of gardening and an emerging interest in therapeutic horticulture. Finishing work gave me the scope to look for volunteering opportunities and Growing Support offered a chance to engage with older people, frequently be outdoors, and learn about new and practical ways to enable people to enjoy gardening and green crafts.



What were your first impressions?

The gardening activities revealed how diverse the needs of older people are, and how much pleasure can be gained by involvement in a simple task such as holding a trowel, dead heading a plant, sniffing herbs or perhaps just quietly chatting over a flower or a picture. I was astonished how quickly the time passed and how richly involved it had felt.

I was struck by how welcome we were at the care home and how focused the staff can be in supporting residents with activities.

What do you feel you have gained from volunteering?

It still feels like early days but I am learning to take a step back and really think about the widely varying needs of individuals, how to communicate to help them engage in activities meaningfully and with pleasure. I am learning about how their response can vary from session to session – and how surprising they can be. I have learned new skills - making origami seed packets for one. I feel I have a long way to go and I look forward to learning much more.

As well as bringing in activities, I enjoy being a part of the breath of fresh air that visitors from the community can bring in to a care setting. I feel that what Growing Support offers is of real benefit and I enjoy being a part of that.

What do you feel about the training you have had as a volunteer?

The initial Induction was friendly and comprehensive. We have been consulted about what training we would find helpful and offered opportunities to share experiences and build on skills. We have also had links to helpful online training - for example about dementia. Training has also happened through the support and experience of the facilitators during the sessions.

Would you recommend volunteering with Growing Support?

Yes, absolutely and I have already. I think it is a very professional organisation but the approach is always open and relaxed. I feel genuinely valued as a volunteer.