

growing support

because gardens are good for you



Volunteering with Growing Support: Rosie's Story



Why did you volunteer with Growing Support?

In May I finished my MA and part of my dissertation looked at horticulture and the benefits of being outside. The course was quite theoretical, so I was looking to get involved with more practical projects where I could be outdoors and making a difference.

At the same point my Gran, who turned 90 this year, was in and out of hospital and was looking at potentially moving into a care home. This experience made me increasingly aware of the older generation and their needs. With people living much longer than they used to, I think it is important that we pay attention to this part of society – most of us will be old one day after all!

What were your first impressions?

I was nervous at first, in particular I was concerned about getting the communication right, especially with people who perhaps had limited verbal skills left. However, I needn't have worried. The Growing Support facilitator I worked with was very supportive and I settled in quickly, it just felt natural.

Nobody judges you and you realise all the people you are helping are very different. I was very struck by the diversity of the residents and by the fact that at the end of the session everyone, no matter what their abilities, seemed to take something away from their involvement.

What do you feel you have gained from volunteering?

I am really keen on the New Economic Foundation's "5 ways to wellbeing" – this is a set of 5 'actions' which help to increase wellbeing, they are to: 'connect', 'be active', 'take notice', 'keep learning' and 'give'. For me volunteering in general and with Growing Support in particular fills all these different areas. I think in the same way that what Growing Support does is beneficial for the people we work with, you also get to feel these same benefits as a volunteer, for example from being outside, from talking to people and from learning new skills.

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

The induction training was really comprehensive and answered all my initial questions about volunteering, the sessions and helping people with dementia.

Since then I've attended a number of training workshops which have given me new gardening and green craft skills. I have learned loads and the training has been amazing. I've also found the volunteer meetings beneficial and I like that we are all able to contribute ideas from our own experience. All the training has been really useful and practical.

Would you recommend volunteering with Growing Support?

Yes, definitely, in fact I already have! It's such a rewarding volunteering experience. I leave sessions in a better mood than I was in when I woke up that day. It totally lifts my mood. I love the social interaction, what happens in the sessions is so rich and meaningful for me as a volunteer.

