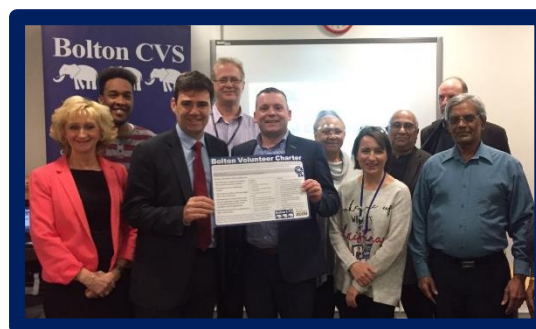




What volunteering did for me...

January 28th 2013. Four o'clock in the afternoon. My wife came into the kitchen and said she wasn't well and felt a little funny. What happened over the course of that early evening and into the following morning changed the course of our lives unrecognisably. My wife wasn't just feeling unwell she had in fact contracted an unknown virus that has left her paralysed. For 2 weeks it was unclear what her condition was or even if she would survive as there was a real fear that her vital organs would begin to shut down as a result of the virus. After 13 weeks of treatment Sue regained some mobility but was left severely damaged and in constant pain from the waist down.

by David, a Bolton CVS Volunteer.



Previous to this my wife was very active. Sue had two jobs, both of which she loved, and would spend what other time she had on loving and caring for her family. By early 2017 despite the efforts of the neurological specialists at the Walton Centre in Liverpool and the fantastic Neurology Unit at Salford it dawned that despite all the efforts, trials and interventions of all these eminent neurological and paid specialists nothing could be done and my wife's mental health took a nose dive. To the point that I had to seek a referral to the mental health unit. It was also at this same time that after four years of struggling to pay the mortgage due to our circumstances the bank finally gave up on us and we were forced to sell the family home.

This sent my wife totally over the edge and Sue threatened suicide many times and I have to admit that during those very dark days there were times when it seemed like a viable option for the pair of us! It was during the mental health assessment that I also broke down as the four years of trying to keep everything together finally proved too much for me and also mentally and physically and I had to start medication for a heart condition and depression and by this time I had to give up work completely and become a full time carer for my wife.



Once the dust had settled and my wife had completed counselling and had been appointed a key worker to prevent any repeats of the previous breakdown I realised that I was over caring, trying to do every little task for my wife when actually she was not only capable of doing such tasks but needed to do things for herself as part of her recovery. It was due to this that I decided to spend a few hours a week out of the flat volunteering to give both of us respite.

I had applied to volunteer with Bolton Hospice and while my DBS was being processed I called into the Bolton CVS Hub to see what opportunities were available and was quickly assigned to the reception and administration role and after a few weeks finding my feet, I started to feel comfortable in the role and without exaggeration or drama it has been life changing!!! Previous to my wife's illness I had held a very good job travelling across UK and Europe for a large international industrial corporation and I still felt that I had a lot of offer volunteering.

The staff at the Hub are aware of my situation and whenever I am on shift somebody always asks How are you? Not just in passing but with sincerity and grace and I know that if we have not had a good week I can talk about it and they will listen and offer support and advice were appropriate and in return it gives me a huge lift and a sense of pride and worth when I have sat a reception and been able to give a kind word or a hand of support to some of the service users of the many groups that reside in the Hub. Due to my volunteering I have recently come off the anti-depressants without any side effect or recurrence so for me this is a perfect example of social prescribing at work.

I would say to anyone thinking of volunteering for whatever reason, as the reasons for volunteering are varied and many. Do not doubt yourself. Bolton CVS will find opportunities for you to match your ability and expectations, it will change your life and you will walk two inches taller. Amaze yourself and be amazing in the eyes of others. At the top of this page I needed care from the community. Now I am helping to care for the community

Seek and you shall find!!

Find out more about volunteering in Bolton:

Volunteering can have a positive impact on your life and the lives of others in Bolton. To find out more about volunteering and how you can be connected to opportunities that interest you, please contact the Bolton CVS team:

Email: info@boltoncvs.org.uk and volunteering@boltoncvs.org.uk.

Telephone: 01204 546 010

Website: boltoncvs.org.uk and boltoncvs.org.uk/volunteering-services