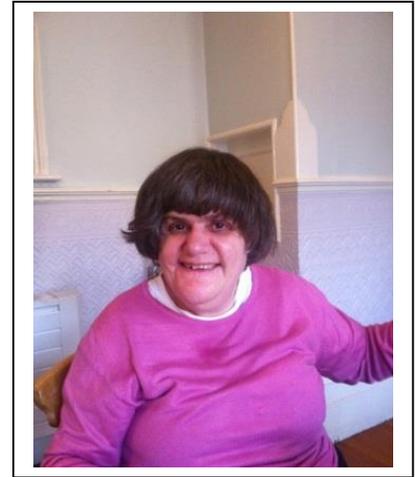


Volunteer Buddy case study: Susan and Jill

"Volunteering to support Susan has given me more confidence because she opens up to me. She's made me come out of myself, and I think I've done that for her too."



Susan asked for a Volunteer Buddy to support her with baking cakes for her friends and her mum, going to her favourite café, and doing activities like walking, dancing, aerobics and gardening.

Jill has been supporting Susan most weeks since February, 2014. The Team Leader Beverley says: "Susan obviously looks forward to Jill coming. Last week, Susan came to ask me, 'Jill's not in today, is she?' I reminded her that no, Jill can't make it this week because of the school holidays [Jill has to look after her grandchildren] but she will be back next week. Susan was obviously reassured by this, and looking forward to seeing Jill again. Susan always makes Jill a cup of tea or coffee when she arrives, and they have a chat. I think it's important that Susan is building up a friendly relationship, apart from with staff."

Finding common ground

Volunteer Buddy Jill agrees: "Susan and I enjoy each other's company. She always asks me about my little girl and my family and how they're doing. We keep finding out things we have in common. We both like making things, games, drawing. We also found out we're both allergic to penicillin! We both laughed when we found that out. It sounds silly, but I was a bit nervous when I went to meet Susan for the first time. I didn't really know what to expect, but spending time with Susan has really made me appreciate how people with a learning disability are just like everyone else."

Gaining confidence

Jill says: "Volunteering to support Susan has also helped me a lot with my own confidence. Susan's given me confidence because she opens up to me. She's made me come out of myself, and I think I've done that for her too. My kids are really pleased with the change in me."

Beverley says: "Jill has a joke and a laugh with Susan, and she's also really calm and gentle. Susan can get very anxious, so a calm approach is really helpful."

Looking to the future

"When my nan was ill with dementia, I used to help care for her, and I realised this is what I want to do. I want to help people. But I wouldn't have had the confidence to do it before volunteering with Brandon Trust. I haven't worked much as I've been bringing up children and grandchildren since I was 18. My experience volunteering with Brandon Trust has also helped me to get onto an adult social care course. I'm looking forward to the future!"