

Changing Lives: Involvement in Volunteering

My sister died in 2010, and she left behind her son and her daughter. Her daughter, my niece came to live with us and I was her carer. Shortly after she moved out to live on her own, my husband left me. That was in the June, and then in the following February I got involved with Involvement.

The service users, the volunteers do have a voice. I think we have a voice individually and collectively. It's given me my confidence back and self-esteem.

How are you involved as a volunteer at the Rosewood Centre?

We can get together and chat about what we're going to do and how we're going to move forward. It's a family atmosphere. We have a buffet lunch, we have chance to sit and talk and share.

We get new people visiting on a Friday and we can introduce them to everybody and let them know what's going on in the centre. We have guest speakers to talk to us about the Trust, and what they do in the Trust.

We have a gardening group too, so we get to help out in the garden. We grow some of our own vegetables and salads. There's herbs in the garden, there's strawberry plants, there's roses.

How do you get involved elsewhere in the Trust?

I'm working with the patients within Rampton, to train them to sit on an interview panel and interview for staff. I think to go in there and to take the outside world in, I think is very important, because I think it gives them hope and opportunity. They're being valued, because we're listening to them and talking to them and getting them to choose staff for the Trust.

Patients Council – National High Secure Healthcare Service for Women

The ladies in there had a chance to talk about real issues that were affecting them. I think from that meeting what I gathered was, that they were being listened to and issues raised that were important. It's just those little things that can eat away at you and cause you difficulty. So, it was very empowering the group that night because they were getting to raise issues, they were being listened to and they had a voice. We tried to problem-solve there and then if we could, but if we couldn't Martina promised to take the issues away and come back to the ladies.

How has being involved helped you?

I think for myself, doing that piece of work was very good for my own recovery also. I'll never forget the day I spoke, telling patients about my recovery story and I just looked up and saw their faces and realised how important it was to do that work.