

The Joy of being a Good Neighbour



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There's so many things you can do to get involved with your local community and offer a helping hand. One such way is through the Good Neighbours Buddy Scheme which is run by North Tyneside VODA. The Buddy Project aims to enable local residents to regain their confidence and independence post lockdown through buddying roles. The project seeks to address issues of loneliness and isolation by supporting local residents to become more connected to their local community. Good Neighbour Buddy Volunteers will provide practical support with getting back out into the community on a short-term basis.

Good Neighbours began helping beneficiaries in 2016 on a small-scale level and gradually became more prevalent, especially amid the 2020 Coronavirus pandemic. Whilst lockdown has ended, VODA has noticed that the Buddy Scheme really helps those beneficiaries who remain anxious. Josie Robinson, VODA's Ending Loneliness Coordinator commented: "We quickly realised after talking to beneficiaries and volunteers that people are very anxious about coming out of isolation and returning to the world. A lot has changed since the lockdown and they are nervous of the unknown, concerned about safety, don't know the correct protocol for shopping and visiting places and many other things. Some people have spent the whole of lockdown on their own, many suffering from loneliness and isolation. We are keen to see how our amazing Good Neighbours volunteers can support this progression back into the world with these new volunteer buddy roles."

There's a variety of roles that volunteers can fill within the Buddy Scheme such as a Community Buddy, Shopping Buddy or a Walking Buddy. One beneficiary of the Buddy Scheme is Derek. Derek has broadened his horizons since restrictions were relaxed, exploring a number of community venues with the support of his buddy David. Derek was keen to get out and about again after being stuck at home for so long. To begin with David and Derek went for a walk and then for a cup of tea at the North Shields Fish Quay. Derek's confidence had grown such that the following week the pair visited the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle together. They walked to Tynemouth the next week, and Cullercoats another time. Recently, they have visited the Baltic museum in Gateshead and the Discovery Museum in Newcastle. All the while, David has kept a gentle eye on Derek, observing his mood and making enquiries into his ongoing welfare. Since May, David has logged over 40 hours as a community buddy. Derek always enjoys his walks with his buddy but is still a little anxious about joining a larger walking group due to limited mobility. Having someone to support him means he can rest when needed and catch up with a cuppa afterwards.

skills or experience, just the desire and willingness to help people in the community who need it. Good Neighbour Buddy Volunteers will provide practical support with getting back out into the community on a short-term basis.

Buddy volunteer support will comprise of three key roles:

- **Shopping Buddies** to accompany residents to go shopping for groceries at their local store
- **Walking Buddies** to enable residents to build their strength and confidence in getting out and about
- **Community Buddies** to assist people in getting involved in community activities such as coffee mornings or a craft group

If you'd like more information about becoming a Good Neighbour please contact josie.robinson@voda.org.uk

Related Links

- [Buddy Referral](#)



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