

June Adamson

Healthwatch Sunderland Volunteer Champion



Hello I'm June, one of the volunteers with Healthwatch Sunderland and I've been asked to speak to you about 'what volunteering means to me'.

First a little background: a few years ago I had several silent strokes which left me with cognitive problems and resulted in me being given early retirement from work on health grounds.

I found while there is help for people who have physical deficiencies from strokes there is nothing for people who, like me, have majorly cognitive problems even though these can be just as disabling because it can be very stressful when you have to plan everything you used to just do.

I then went on a course with Momentum Skills who explained, through planned work and discussions, why I have these problems and learn either coping strategies or how to retrain my brain so I can find alternative ways to do things.

On completion I was advised to try voluntary work as a way forward and contacted Healthwatch and NERAF to challenge myself and learn new skills.

My work with Healthwatch has boosted my self-confidence as I learned how to approach and interact with people through information stands, care home visits and group work, explaining who we are and how we are trying to improve health and social care services throughout the city by asking for feedback on what works and what can be improved.

Through the group work I have also found a way to turn negatives into positives by explaining the personal problems I sometimes have with cognition, especially speech and comprehension, I find I can empathise more and they respond positively to this.

While I know I will never regain some of the skills I have lost, volunteering has given me the opportunity to develop and use other skills and I am enjoying the ongoing challenges

which volunteering presents. I look forward to the new challenges ahead as the role evolves.

I find my volunteering has boosted my morale and self-worth in lots of ways I didn't expect and with the continuing support of Wendy, Anna, the staff and other volunteers I hope to continue improving into the future as my role develops.

Thank you for listening.