



Can you provide tea and a chat?

Service is appealing for more volunteer helpers

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A CHARITY which supports more than 1,000 elderly people across Staffordshire each week is appealing for volunteers.

The Royal Voluntary Service (RVS) steps in to combat social isolation and help residents adapt to life following the upheaval of a hospital stay or the trauma of losing their husband or wife.

Now it needs more people to give up some of their time to make the clients cups of tea, take them to appointments, work in the café at its Hanley-based centre, or chip in with admin and office work.

David Wozny, from Newcastle, had always worked in IT when a bicycle accident left him with a brain trauma.

The 47-year-old began volunteering six months ago to regain a sense of purpose, but hadn't expected the satisfaction he gains from voluntary work.

David said: "I saw a listing for the RVS online and I thought it sounded

interesting, and that I'd like to be helpful. I joined the befriending service, and I have not looked back.

"I'm still in recovery, and being able to get out and meet people has given me a sense of purpose.

"I had no idea there was so much more to get out of it, I hadn't realised how much satisfaction I'd get from it, it's fantastic."

Michael Foy, from

Newcastle, has been volunteering since he retired.

The 73-year-old said: "I go to see a lady who's very intelligent, but she's trapped in the house and doesn't have conversations with anyone. I can talk for England.

"It's far better to get up and think how am I going to do that, than think what am I going to do?"

Users of RVS services are aged 55 upwards, with a larger proportion who need more help being aged 75 or above. However, the RVS can cater for a variety of needs and medical problems.

Christine Coll, aged 68, from Longton, has been going to the centre for 10 years since she suffered a stroke. Initially,

she was in a wheelchair and unable to talk, but the RVS has helped her to recover.

Christine said: "I love coming here. They got me out of the wheelchair, and going to church again.

"I feel confident in myself, and I've got a lot of friends here. They help you with everything – the staff are wonderful.

"I'd be stuck at home looking out of the window otherwise, and I'm so proud of this place. I feel part of the community and, when you're poorly, you can feel that you're not."

Operations manager Lynn Hensman, aged 57, from Stoke, began volunteering at RVS 30 years ago.

She said: "Everyone who wants to volunteer has a different motivation. They may want to help people, or

build up experience.

"Research shows that there are lots of benefits to volunteering – volunteers get as much as out of it as the users."

■ *To find out more about volunteering, visit www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/volunteer.*





FRIENDS: Service co-ordinator Carol Ashley, left, with Christine Coll, who the RVS has helped to recover after suffering a stroke which left her in a wheelchair and unable to talk.

Picture: Malcolm Hart